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H E R R P A U L U S

HIS RISE, HIS GREATNESS, AND HIS FALL

BY

WALTER BESANT

AUTHOR OF 'ALL SORTS AND CONDITIONS OF MEN' ETC.



IN THREE VOLUMES

VOL. III.


472819
25.3.48

London

CHATTO & WINDUS, PICCADILLY

1888

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PRINTED BY
SPOTTISWOODE AND CO., NEW STREET SQUARE
LONDON

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OF

THE THIRD VOLUME.

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BOOK THE THIRD.

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HERR PAULUS.

BOOK THE THIRD.

CHAPTER I.

NO SYMPATHY AT ALL.

‘WELL, now, Ziph, I am just glad to see you. I expected you all yesterday and the day before. You ran away almost before I had time to give you my address. Why did you run away? And why did you not tell me what you were doing? But I knew you would come to see me. Why did you run away?’

The place was Bethiah’s studio, and the visitor was none other than Paul, or Herr Paulus, whom Bethiah addressed as Ziph. The reader’s natural intelligence has, no doubt, long since identified Paul with Ziphion Trinder.

‘Sit down, Ziph. Take a chair and let us talk. Will you have anything—a cup of tea? No? This is like old times, is it not? You foolish old Ziph! Why did you run away from your oldest friend? As if you could keep away from me! Tell me all you have been doing—stay, let me tell you first about myself; then your mind will be quite at ease. I am working at art. This is my studio. My poor dear father is dead, and I have enough to live upon. I don’t like living in leading-strings like the English girls, and so I go about alone and independent. I have travelled and lived in Rome, and Florence, and Paris. Now I am living here, alone, as you see; and I am not engaged, or married, or in love, or anything. I am quite well and strong, and I am as happy as I can expect to be, and I have made many friends since we two parted; but I am more than glad to see my dear old Ziph once more.’

‘You are looking very well, Bethiah,’ he replied with a little constraint, quite obvious to her.

‘I am always very well, my dear Ziph, and to see you makes me seventeen again. I think we were about the time of sweet seventeen when we parted, and we are past four-and-twenty, which is a great age. Stay, Ziph. Let me look at you before you begin to talk ; because, you know, when you do begin you will not let me think of anything else. Why, Ziph, I declare you have grown very handsome, my dear boy. Your moustache becomes you mightily, sir, and you have let your hair grow picturesquely long. I must take your portrait. I do wish all young men would pay as much attention to the style of hair which suits them. What have you done? What is your profession? You cannot be an artist. No: it is impossible.’ She looked at him critically and curiously. ‘You could never draw even a pig beside a haystack with any real feeling for the lovely curve of a pig’s neck.’

‘No, Bethiah,’ Paul replied with rather a wan smile, ‘I am not an artist.’

‘Let me see. Are you a great poet? You look like one—and now, I remember,

when you left home you had quite a bolster of poems. Oh, Ziph, are you really a great poet under another name? Nobody, certainly, could look half so poetic. What great poet has arisen in the last seven years? You can't be Swinburne—or Browning; no—that is impossible.'

'No,' said Paul sadly, 'my ambitions in the poetic direction were very quickly dismissed. The bolster has long since gone into the waste-paper basket.'

'Have you turned actor? You used to be able to imitate very well. Do you remember one evening in the garden imitating some Spiritualist cheat and humbug who brought along his show?' Paul showed certain signs of confusion at the reminiscence. 'Oh, I am sure you are an actor. What is your theatrical name, Ziph? Let me see. I have been to all the London theatres. I have seen all the actors. Could I possibly have seen you without recognising you? What young actors have lately—— Are you Mr. Charles Brookfield, for example?'

‘No, Bethiah. I am not an actor.’

‘Well, then, let me guess again. You are a novelist, Ziph? Yes—you must be a novelist, and a successful novelist. Nobody but a successful novelist could afford such a beautiful fur-lined coat. What is your assumed name? Are you Frederick Anstey? Did you write “Vice Versâ”? Are you—are you—Rider Haggard? Oh, did you write “She”?’

‘No, Bethiah. I am not a novelist.’

‘Well, then, you must have gone out West and found a silver-mine; or you may have gone partners in a Government contract; or you may have speculated in railway-shares; or you may have formed a ring and a corner; or you may have married the daughter of an English duke, so that the old man pays the bills; or perhaps you have invented something which everybody must have—or you’ve caught on with a patent medicine. Come, Ziph: tell me quick. I am burning to know. First, though. Your father and mother are well. Have you written to them lately?’

‘No,’ Paul replied shortly.

‘You have not written to them since you left home? You will have to explain that, sir. Without explanation, it seems very wrong of you. My Aunt Martha—you remember my Aunt Martha?—told me in her last letter that Deacon Trinder kept smart. By the way, I don’t like, out of America, being called Bethiah. So, sir, change my name to Kitty. Do you like it better? Kitty—Kitty. It sounds somehow more Christian and cultivated than Bethiah. Doesn’t it?’

‘It is much better,’ said Paul. Then he looked up with the old familiar smile and said, ‘I don’t like, out of America, being called Ziphion, and I have changed my name to Paul. Does that sound better than Ziphion, Kitty?’

Bethiah laughed merrily.

‘Paul? Oh, much better! Paul—Paul, you look as if you must certainly have been christened Paul, and I think you must be the son of an Italian nobleman. Is the Deacon a count in disguise? Yes, I shall easily learn to call you Paul. Paul, now I think of it, we must have been Paul and Kitty in the old-

time days, only somehow we called ourselves Bethiah and Ziphion for short. Paul—yes, it is a very good name for you. And now, Paul, tell me what it is that has made you so rich and prosperous. There is another Paul somewhere in London. Hetty told me about him—you don't know Hetty? This Paul is a most dreadful humbug and impostor. He pretends to do the Spiritualistic rubbish. Hetty believes in him, and—— Why, Paul, what is the matter?’

For Paul's tell-tale face, impenetrable no longer since the departure of the Powers, flamed swiftly. And Bethiah remembered Hetty's description of the great Magician. Young, dark, handsome beyond other men, voice soft and musical, his head shaped like that in her own sketch.

‘Ziph!’ she cried, with a sudden change in her voice, ‘tell me quick—my dear old friend—you are not that Paul?’

‘Yes, Bethiah,’ he replied, not daring to raise his eyes, ‘I am that Paul—no other. I am the man of whom Hetty has spoken.’

The girl sat down amazed and confounded. For a space neither spoke.

‘Oh,’ she cried presently, ‘is it possible! You, Ziph? Oh, my poor boy, you to be sunk so low! Oh, that is why you ran away from me?’

‘You call it low?’ he replied, trying to assume the air of one who is well satisfied with himself. But he failed. ‘Well, I supposed you would take that line. I might have suspected it. Outside the New England country town they do not call it sinking low. I am respected—respected, Bethiah. I am already nearly at the head of the profession.’

‘Profession? What a profession!’

‘Yes, a profession; and one that is perhaps honourable——.’

‘No, Ziph, no; keep that kind of talk to yourself. In the old time we should have called it a wicked profession. Now I tell you that it is a contemptible and a disgraceful profession. Yes, I tell you so openly, because, Ziph, we cannot make pretences to each other of any kind, even pretences to salve the con-

science of one of us. Now I understand—oh, now it is quite clear—why you ran away from me, why you have never written to your mother or to me. You were ashamed to tell us what you were doing. That is why you have not been to see me for three whole days after you found that I was in London. Oh, Ziph, this is terrible! I thought you might be dead! I never thought to find you—here.’ She stopped.

‘Bethiah!’ said Paul, really with tears in his eyes, ‘don’t begin that way; you don’t know. Hear me first. When I met you a week ago my head was filled with many things. Nothing surprised me more than to meet you.’

‘You tried to run away from me. You were ashamed, Paul—you were ashamed.’

‘No, I was astonished. When I got home I remembered that it might have looked like trying to run away——’

‘It did, Paul; it did.’

‘Then I was prevented the next day. And at last when I do come, instead of giving me a

little sympathy you condemn me unheard. And you are the only person in the world who can advise and help me. Bethiah, for old time's sake, let me tell you everything. Then you can despise me if you like—you can send me away——'

'Oh, Ziph! as if I could ever despise you! as if I could ever wish to send you away, whatever you have done! But to think that you, of all men in the world, should have stooped to such a profession! Ziph! Do you never remember the days when your heart was filled with the love of truth? Oh, how you would have scorned such a life in those days!'

'Bethiah, for pity's sake, hear me.'

.

'No,' cried Bethiah, after half an hour of greatly involved personal narrative in the style adopted by those who wish to make a good case out of a bad one. 'It is no use, Paul, to talk to me in this way. You are wrapping up the truth and trying to hide it.'

'What am I to tell you, then?'

‘You are hiding quantities of things. I know already what you have been doing in London, because Hetty and her mother have told me from time to time. I know very well that you have become a medium, a mesmerist, a thought-reader, a prophet, an oracle—and Heaven knows what beside. Yes, yes—it is no use parading the inestimable blessings which you have poured upon the people who have trusted you. I know all about the Miracles of the blind girl being made to see, and the Indian newspaper, and I know that you saved, somehow, their fortunes. I know, besides, that you have been pretending to preach a kind of new Gospel, and that you profess to annihilate space and to see spirits and talk with them, and that you carry people out of themselves. I want to know more than this. I want to know what you do it for.’

Paul made no reply. He was thinking, in fact, how best to carry on his case, the current of his narrative being thus rudely interrupted. He had prepared a most beautiful story, with which he thought to convince his old friend.

In the story he posed as the possessor of a mysterious Power which he used for beneficent purposes only. He was getting on very nicely with it—and now Bethiah pulled him up short. Girls have no imagination.

‘My dear old friend,’ the girl took his unwilling hands, ‘can you look me in the face and tell me that you are proud of yourself and of your seven years’ work?’

It appeared by that experiment that he could not.

‘Go back to the beginning, Paul,’ she said. ‘Tell me, exactly, what happened to you in New York?’

‘Nothing happened, except that my contributions were all refused, and that I got through all my money.’

‘And then?’

‘Then, by accident, I fell into the hands of the man who taught me all I know. Bethiah,’ he broke off earnestly, ‘it is not all cheating and lying. I declare that it is not. You do not understand. It is a way of life that requires the utmost skill with the

quickest intellect and the widest knowledge. Consider what we did. The people came every day to consult us ; they asked us about their business, about their private affairs, about their health, about their love matters, about everything. We had to give them replies that would help them. For this purpose it was necessary to learn how to read their thoughts—that is, from the least hint of word and look and gesture to connect their questions with what was in their minds. Then we had to know all kinds of business matters, to watch the stock market, and all the markets ; to know the real meanings of telegrams in the papers ; to know the laws of physiology, and especially the action of the nerves. Anybody might do so much. There remained, however, the power without which all this knowledge would be useless—the power of magnetism or mesmerism. Bethiah—Kitty—it was the development of this power in myself which raised the profession and redeemed it from—from what you would call it. For it is—indeed, indeed it is—a real gift, a

special gift: there is not a man in America who had this gift in such force and so well developed as myself. There were few indeed of those who came to our office who could not be subjected to my influence; and those who most readily yielded were those whom we could most really help. We did help them. We were so much more clever than ordinary folk; we knew so much more; and we were so much better able to consider any case without passion or prejudice, that we could give good counsel to anyone whose case we understood. Even the unbelievers acknowledged the success of those who came to consult us. It was all done by superior knowledge and acuteness—all. We were paid, like all other specialists, for our skill and knowledge.'

'So you say.'

'Consider again, Bethiah. The doctor pretends to understand and give advice upon every kind of disease, yet his knowledge is very limited. The lawyer pretends to know the whole body of the law, and undertakes every kind of case, yet his real knowledge is

small. The clergyman pretends to know more about the next world than other people, yet his knowledge is arrived at by the same book which we all possess. In the same way we undertook to advise upon all cases, whatever might be brought to us connected with the conduct of life. We knew more than most men, because one of us was old and had studied all his life, while the other—was an apt pupil, Kitty. Yet there must have been many aspects of life strange even to the elder man's experience. Do you not see that in our profession we were only acting exactly the same as the members of every other profession?'

'Nothing of the kind, Paul. That is a mere subterfuge. You placed a gulf not to be passed between yourself and the other professions when you pretended that your advice was dictated by spirits. You pretended to have supernatural powers, and you traded on that pretence. Answer that, Paul.'

'I say,' he replied doggedly, 'that we did what others did.'

'You did more, Paul, and worse. And

you were conscious of your sin. Else why did you not write to your mother and to me? We mourned for you as for one dead. How will your mother mourn when she learns how your time has been employed?’

Paul left this question unanswered.

‘I have shown you,’ he said, ‘that the life was one which required natural gifts of the highest kind, and great study. More than that, it required the greatest temperance and self-control, the mastery of all the emotions and passions, and the most rigid self-denial. No monk could lead a life of greater mortification.’

‘All for purposes of deception——’

‘And I do think, Bethiah, that I might have expected a little sympathy.’

‘Sympathy! Oh, Paul! How long did you continue in this occupation?’

‘Until about eight months ago. Then my instructor, who is growing old, decided to retire, and advised me to leave New York for a while, so as to reappear with a greater appearance of mystery—it is the sense of mystery

which helps us. As to this pretence, as you call it, of spiritual assistance, that is nothing. Anybody could pretend so much. But it is not everybody who could command the sense of mysterious presence and influence.'

'He talks,' said Bethiah, addressing her teapot, 'as if he gloried in his deceptions. Go on, please.'

'We left New York and came to Europe. We have been travelling about, seeing the principal capitals. My master is now partly paralysed, and will never again do anything ; and——'

'Stay a moment, Paul,' said Bethiah, interrupting. 'You say it is eight months since you left New York?'

'Yes.'

'Eight months ago? Are you telling me the truth, now?'

'I always tell you the truth. Surely, Bethiah, you do not think that I would deceive you?'

'You told those people that you came from Abyssinia ; that you knew nothing about

your birthplace or your people. You pretended to be able to speak any language on occasion. You pretended—oh, Paul, how *can* you ask me for sympathy with this monstrous pile of falsehoods?’

‘It was only the machinery. We must have machinery. It is only the same thing when an English clergyman puts on a surplice and a hood. He isn’t, really, unlike other men; but he wants a little machinery.’

‘What did you do it for, Paul?’ Bethiah repeated. ‘Tell me, if you can, what you have got by it.’

‘By coming here, you mean? It is no use telling you in your present mood. You would not understand me.’

‘Tell me, however: I want to understand. Did you come here for the purpose of getting money out of the English?’

‘No: I wanted to distinguish myself.’

‘To distinguish yourself? Distinction! In such a way as this?’

‘Why not? I know myself to be the cleverest and most skilful mesmerist in

America. I know the whole of the Spiritualist business from the lowest to the highest—from the common Medium with his taps, to the Occult Philosopher with his Mahatmas. I thought I would come to London, where my exploits would be witnessed by the whole world—London is somehow the real centre of the world. Then I would aim at the highest thing ever attempted. I would soar, by myself, without any aid, far above the petty familiar tricks of the mediums. In the history of Spiritualism I would have a chapter to myself. I learned that there was an Englishman here, rich and credulous, who wanted to be considered the chief of the Spiritualists, and was always anxious and ready to cultivate the acquaintance of every new and promising arrival. All American Spiritualists knew the name of Brudenel. Then I thought I would introduce myself to him with a great preliminary flourish, and when I had contrived to win his full confidence, with that of as many of his friends as possible, I would execute a *coup* the possibility of which could not be

explained by any other supposition than the direct interference of supernatural agency. I knew I could do this, because I had learned developments of the magnetic force which I am sure have never been attempted before. I had in my mind the general plan. I trusted to chance for the details. It was to be the achievement of a feat which Spiritualists have often been invited to do, but which they have always refused to do—of course, because they are unable to do it. This feat I resolved to accomplish. I would do it before a room full of people. I would announce beforehand what I was going to do. Other mediums would be jealous, but they should not be able to deny the fact, and they should not be able to repeat it. The believers would rejoice greatly and be strengthened in their faith. Then everybody would want me to repeat the performance, and then——'

'And then?' said Bethiah.

'Nothing more. Because I intended at this point to vanish altogether. I should go back quietly to America and under my own

name carry on my own business again, with the glory of the new-made reputation. That, Bethiah, was the object with which I came here.'

'Well, Ziph, one cannot praise your object; and yet it was not altogether ignoble. You did not mean to make pretences by which to get money for yourself. Go on with your story. You found this unfortunate and credulous person? You went to him with your story about Abyssinia and the rest of it?'

'Yes. I found him far more credulous than I could have conceived possible. All the Abyssinian machinery proved quite useless. As for my story of Prince Menelek, it wasn't wanted, though the girls liked it. I now understand that I should have done better—I see it now—to have maintained a perfect simplicity. I ought to have been myself the Sage. The machinery only encumbered me.'

'And have you played off your great miracle?'

'I have succeeded far beyond my expectations. I have been enabled not only to perform the greatest miracle of modern times—

the appearance of this day's paper from India—but I have actually saved their fortunes for these people, and now the whole world is ringing with my praises.'

'Is it? I see the papers every day, but I have seen no account of your miracles.'

'You don't go into society, Bethiah,' said Paul irritably. 'I tell you that in the best circles they are talking about nothing else.'

'Well, Paul, if that is so, your programme is complete so far. And it only remains to crown the deception by vanishing.'

'Yes, yes. Unfortunately, I cannot carry out that part of the programme.'

'Why not? Are you obliged to plan another miracle? What a horrid thing it must be to be always arranging a new miracle!'

'No, no; there will be no more miracles. Bethiah, I told you I wanted your sympathy. Never mind what has been done. That is done and cannot be helped. I want your advice about the future.'

'I advise you to leave your present em-

ployment, buy a hammer, and break stones in the road, Paul, if you can get nothing better to do.'

'I will, I will. In fact I must. Bethiah—oh! my old friend! I have lost my Power.'

'What do you mean?'

'I mean that I have lost everything that gave me the power of doing that which I have done. I can no longer carry on my profession. I can no longer read thoughts; nor can I influence others. I cannot do the simplest thing except the conjuring and the mere mechanical part of the profession. I have lost my Power.'

'Why can't you do these things? How have you lost the power?'

'Everything depends upon the magnetic power and the control that has gone from me.'

'Why has it gone?'

'Because—how can I make you understand? Anybody, you see, can mesmerise if he finds a subject suitable to his powers. But the complete mastery over the mysterious

magnetic force—Bethiah, upon my word, I am not talking nonsense’—indeed he looked earnest enough for the most sublime truths—‘I say that complete mastery over magnetic force can only be developed by long and patient study and continual practice. And it can only be maintained by one who keeps a perfect control over his own passions and emotions. A man with this gift must never fall into a rage, never be moved by pity, love, hatred, revenge, ambition, or anxiety. He must be complete master of himself. Bethiah’—he repeated this assurance with the greatest earnestness—‘I declare that I am not deceiving you. It is, indeed, a most real force which I was able to wield and control. It gave me the most wonderful power over all those whom I could subdue. I admit there were many who would not come under my influence. I could do nothing with them. But at this Englishman’s house, from Lady Augusta and Mr. Cyrus Brudenel down to the boy in buttons, they were all—except two—my slaves, obedient to my will, ready

at a moment to execute my orders and to perform, unconscious themselves, whatever services I required of them. I treated their ailments: I found out their wishes and wants: I learned all the secrets of their lives: I was more than a confessor to them, because they confessed without their knowledge, and they always confessed the truth.'

'That seems a Power which no man, not even the noblest, ought to have.'

'Yet I possessed that Power. It was mine—and I have lost it.'

'That seems a good thing for the world. How did you lose it?'

'I have totally lost it. I can do nothing. Even Cicely, the most emotional, the most readily respondent, remains wholly unmoved. She believes still—nothing would shake her faith in me, I think; but I cannot move her.'

'I begin to have hopes of you, Paul,' said Bethiah the unsympathetic. 'You cannot exercise this terrible magic any longer. So much the better. You have not told me how

you came to lose the power. Did you fall into a rage?’

‘Worse than that. The most fatal thing of all is to fall in love, Bethiah. I have fallen in love.’

Bethiah laughed merrily. ‘Oh, Ziph, if you only knew how rueful you look! You have fallen in love! Are you very much in love?’

‘Very much. I can think of nothing else.’

‘And that is how you lost your power! My poor dear boy, are you so terribly to be pitied! Fancy throwing away all that splendid power for the sake of a poor, insignificant girl!’

‘Now you laugh at me.’

‘There was once a boy named Ziphion Trinder, and he called himself Paul for improvement sake—in all mutual improvement societies they begin by improving their names—and he had a gift from the fairies. He was empowered to subdue men and women, and to learn their secrets, and to make them do what he liked—you will observe, Paul, that

the gift was not of the slightest use to him except for vanity and deception ; or to his fellow-creatures, because he could do nothing for them even when they were his most abject slaves. But there was one most disagreeable condition attached to the gift—it is really a very pretty fairy story. The young man was never to feel any emotion, he was not to let his heart be moved at all ; he was never to be carried out of himself ; he was never to be like other men at all : he was to be perfectly cold, passionless, and selfish. Is that a true statement of the case, Paul ?’

‘It is near the truth.’

‘On this condition he could exercise his useless gift. Well, the young man did exercise it for some years. He found that combined with a system of falsehood and pretence it could be made useful for making money. By the way, did you make money, Paul ?’

‘Yes, we made a great deal. My partner, who was my instructor, keeps the money. Oh, I have a great pile of money laid by in his hands.’

‘So he made money, and if he had gone on he would have made a great deal more. And then he would have grown old in pretence and deception, and he would have become every day more selfish and colder-hearted. The end of that young man is dreadful to think of. But kind Heaven willed otherwise, for he was made to fall in love. And as soon as he began to have his heart filled with the thought of another creature besides himself, and when the longings and yearnings of love seized him, his magic power fell from him, and he became exactly like his fellows. Paul, is that well said?’

‘Perhaps. But I have lost my livelihood—my profession is gone.’

‘I hope, at any rate, you have fallen in love with a girl who appreciates your profession at its true value, Paul.’

‘She does not know anything about it. I have not told her.’

‘But you will have to tell her. What is her name, Paul? How did you come to know her? Is she an English girl?’

‘She lives in this house. Her name is Hetty Medlock.’

Kitty sprang from her seat and clapped her hands.

‘Hetty! Hetty herself! Oh, this is delightful! Why, Paul, there is not in the whole world anyone who hates Spiritualism quite so much as poor Hetty.’

‘I know.’

‘And does she know that you love her?’

‘Yes.’

‘And does she—has she accepted your attentions, Paul?’

‘Yes. Oh, Bethiah, she is the dearest girl and the most beautiful in the world! I am madly in love with her. Oh, you know her, you understand how I could not choose but fall in love with her.’

‘I think I can understand, my dear Ziph. She is a beautiful girl, and she is sweet and good. Yes—you have done well to fall in love with her.’

‘I do not know what my partner will say

when I tell him that I must leave the firm. What am I to do?’

‘I don’t know. Hetty will not mind waiting, will she?’

‘I have said nothing yet about waiting. She trusts me in everything.’

‘How much does she know about yourself?’

‘Nothing; or very little. I *could* not tell her all. It is enough for me to have to tell you. I have gained your contempt, Bethiah. I could not bear her contempt as well.’

‘Not my contempt, dear Ziph.’ She gave him her hand. ‘I am sorry for you. It was a great temptation. You were tempted by the appeal to your own cleverness as much as by necessity. I am very sorry for you. But not my contempt. And if Hetty loves you as she should, it would be her forgiveness as well as her pity, but never her contempt, that you would earn by telling her.’

‘I cannot tell her.’

‘But not to tell her is to continue the

deception. Does she believe that you really possessed supernatural powers at all?’

‘Yes; she believes that the things that I have done were effected by powers which we call supernatural, though she knows that I am now no more than any other man. It makes her happier to believe. Remember her history. If she believes in my powers she is also able to believe in her mother’s—any way, in some part of her mother’s—pretensions. That makes her happy. She has long been ashamed of her mother, and now she thinks that she need be ashamed of her no longer. I cannot tell Hetty yet. Do not betray me to her, Bethiah.’

‘No, Ziph, I will not. You may depend upon my honesty. But let me think a little. I am carried away by all that you have told me. I must think for Hetty as well as for you.’

She threw herself upon the sofa and buried her face in her hands.

‘I have thought about it a little more clearly, Ziph. Sit down and let me tell you

what I have thought. Give me your hand. Do you remember, Ziph, how we used to walk hand in hand to church on Sunday—the old-fashioned church built two hundred years ago and more? We talked as we went along about things too high for children's comprehension; but of one thing we were quite sure. It was impossible that our own lives could be other than true and honest. We were foolish children, and we have learned better now. But think, Paul—suppose we knew that our fathers were making their livelihood by false professions and pretence—think what misery and shame we should have endured.'

'I have broken from it. I have left it, Bethiah. I can never return to it.'

'Thank God. You shall not return, dear Ziph. But there is another thing. You will marry Hetty. You think that you will not tell her the secret of the past. Some time or other she will discover it. A roll of forgotten papers, an old letter, a chance recognition—anything may break the secret

to her, and with its discovery all her happiness, and her respect and love for you, will vanish. You must tell her, and that at once.'

Paul hung his head guiltily.

'I cannot yet; I will tell her some time. Oh! Bethiah, I shall have to confess to many . . . pretences. She can never love me if I tell her the truth.'

'She will never love you if she finds it out. You must tell her, Paul. You must. There is no way out of the difficulty except to tell her. Nay; you must confess to all these people.'

'No—no—no, Bethiah, I could not. . To Hetty, perhaps. To Lady Augusta? To Cicely? never.'

'You must, Ziph; you must confess to all, even to Mr. Cyrus Brudenel, before you can stand at the altar, and give your bride the hand of an honest man.'

CHAPTER II.

SATISFIED WITH HIMSELF.

It is pleasing to turn from the winding ways and specious talk of one who wishes to represent himself in a false light, to his natural, simple, straightforward ways when he is making love. Paul, with Bethiah, began by being shiftY and self-conscious. Paul, with Hetty, was brave and candid of soul.

They met when and where they could, and exchanged a hurried word just to keep up their hearts, but three or four days passed before Paul found an opportunity of a serious talk. Love is very serious. Young people laugh and may joke with each other before they fall in love. After, there are no more quips and jests. When lovers are together they laugh little ; smiles are plenty ; it rains

smiles and happiness and kisses, but of laughter there is little, and it is soft and low, as when the girl laughs if her lover calls her a goddess and an angel. She likes it, but she knows that the language is a little—just a little—exaggerated.

This day—the very afternoon of the day when his old playfellow had brought him back to the cold earth and reality again—he found Hetty alone in Cicely's room, and entered it with the transport of a man who has nothing at all on his mind but love. In fact, he had nothing. The plain truths he had just heard fell from him and were forgotten for the moment, because he was so fully possessed with love, and because to him the present was all, and the past and the future did not exist. What mattered if Bethiah disapproved of certain things? They were old things. And here was his girl looking up to greet him with the light of welcome in her limpid eyes, and a blush upon her cheek. Yet she dropped her eyes again, because his were so full of longing that they terrified her.

He closed the door behind him, and ran with outstretched arms and fell upon his knees, not to worship her, but to look up in her face.

‘Hetty—we have hardly spoken—since that day’——

‘No,’ she murmured. ‘Oh! Paul,’ for he was kissing her hands, ‘you must not. Oh! you must not.’

‘Must not love you, my dear?’

‘You are so far above me, Paul. You know what I am. Not even clever. Who am I that you should love me?’

‘No, dear, who am I, that you should love me?’

‘You are so wise and noble, Paul. And you have such wonderful powers.’

‘As for my powers, they have deserted me. Hetty, you have destroyed them. My dear, they gradually vanished as the thought of you began to fill my heart. It is strange. I was warned of what would happen. Yet I could not resist.’

‘Oh! Paul, have I really and truly destroyed your powers?’

‘Really and truly, Hetty. My mind can think of nothing but of you. And all my power depended on the clearness and freedom of my mind.’

‘It is strange. Paul—were you—were you never in love with any other girl?’

‘No, Hetty—never. For seven years I lived apart from women. My Teacher and I had no women in the house. I saw them only when they came to consult him. I never thought of woman’s love, except as a danger to be avoided. It has proved a rock, indeed. Yet—oh! Hetty, if I have your love I shall be the richest man in all the world.’

‘Oh! Paul.’

She conferred this boundless wealth upon him. It needed no more words. Why, he knew that she had already conferred this great gift. He kissed her a thousand times, and called her as many sweet and tender names.

‘Oh!’ he replied. ‘To think that so much happiness was possible! And to think that all these years I have been running after a thing

not worth the having, when there was love waiting for me.'

'But it might have been love for some other girl, Paul.'

'No, no, Hetty, we cannot escape our fate. I was reserved for you. And will you have me? I am but a commonplace man after all ; an American without a profession even ; as for my wisdom, that has gone too ; the fine things which you used to admire will never be said again. As for my nobility, perhaps,' with a touch of bitterness, thinking of the morning, 'perhaps that has yet to come.'

'But you are Paul, always Paul: whether you are doing wonderful things, or whether you have ceased to do them. It is Paul that I shall love, whatever you say or do.'

'My dear ; I have met an old friend of my boyhood. She knows you. She lives in your house. Go to her and ask her to tell you all about me in the old days. She will tell you,' he was sure that Bethiah would tread delicately on the dangerous places, 'better than I can. She will save me the necessity of ex-

plaining quantities of things. Dear Bethiah ! She looks no older than she did some years ago.'

'Do you know her? Did you really know Bethiah before you knew me? Paul, is it possible that you did not fall in love with her?'

'Why, I always loved her, I suppose. She was a kind of sister to me. I always told her everything. But as to falling in love—you don't fall in love with your own sister, do you? And I had to wait for my fate. Hetty, my fate, oh! my fate!'

That Fate which gives a damsel, sweet and lovely, to such a young man, even though his conduct has not been wholly straight, is a kind and generous and forgiving Fate; no relation at all to the lady who carries the scissors and snips the thread.

In the arms of his mistress, Paul forgot everything unpleasant, even the plain truths that Bethiah had presented to him. These truths at the moment caused him pangs unutterable. Now he found the pangs needless; he would not bear them any longer. Pangs

of this character can be put away by a resolute and imaginative man. Why should he bear them? There was no reason for confessing anything to anybody. His power was gone; he could no longer magnetise anybody. Perhaps he was fatigued, and suffered only temporary loss of will. Perhaps he was right in attributing the thing to the depth and strength of this passion of love. Very well: let the power go. This innocent Delilah had lopped his lovely locks. Samson's were doubtless of coarser texture. Very well, no occasion at all to speak of the loss. Even Bethiah's clumsy way of putting the thing—as if he had been a common cheat, as if he had never possessed any power—could not destroy the wonderful halo which his late achievements had caused to spread around his head, so that he looked and felt like the sun in splendour. He felt that halo pressing lightly on his brows. Hetty, he was sure, saw it. So did Lady Augusta and Cicely—poor, blind girl!—and perhaps Sibyl and Tom, though of them he was uncertain. He was perfectly satisfied with

himself. He had come out of his important embassy from the Sage of Abyssinia with éclat. He had perfect reason for the cessation of the powers which had been his credentials. And, besides, the whole world—of this he was persuaded—was ringing with the story of his achievements. To the end of time the story of the things he had done would form the brightest page in the Chronicles of Spiritualism.

As a matter of fact, the whole world knew nothing at all of his achievements. The Indian-paper story was old, and had never found any real credence, and the recent business was going to be kept in the family, because the very remarkable manner in which Mr. Brudeneel sold his shares and forgot all about it would not bear relating to an unsympathetic and a sniggering public. But this Paul did not know, and therefore he was perfectly well satisfied with himself, and went about, naturally, with stuck-up chin.

‘Hetty,’ he cried, buoyantly, ‘let us talk of the future.’

‘Yes, Paul; the future.’

‘What would you like best, Hetty?’

‘To go away—quite away—where there are no spirits and no manifestations.’

‘We will go away, dear. I think’—he spoke as if he had only to choose his retreat anywhere out of the whole world, ‘I think,’ he said, considering carefully, ‘that we will go to America; we will winter in Florida—I do not like the hard winters of the North—and spend our summers on the New Hampshire coast. Or perhaps you would like winter in Sicily and summer—say on the English coast. We will go somewhere—we will find a place where the air is balmy and the sun is always warm. We will have a house with large rooms—I love large rooms—and a library full of books, and a deep verandah, where in the hottest day we shall be able to sit in the shade behind lovely creepers and flowers. There will be a garden full of fruits and flowers; we will live upon grapes and peaches; in the evening you will play to me and I will walk about. Oh! I remember, years ago, in the old days,

how Bethiah played while I dreamed. I wonder if the dreams will come back to me. I used to turn them into poems—pretty bad they were, I expect, but they seemed beautiful and pathetic to me. I have never had those dreams since. Hetty, let me look in your eyes? Oh! I see deep depths in them. What gives those depths to your eyes? You will fill me with those dreams again. Oh! we shall be so happy—so happy, Hetty.’

She was only half carried away by this vision of happiness, because her imagination could not suddenly rise to the same heights; but still she was half carried away, and she repressed the desire, natural to one who still has her own foot resting on the earth, to ask where the money was to come from.

He divined her thoughts.

‘I have got plenty of money, Hetty,’ he said. ‘Do not let any thought of money trouble you. I have got a great pile of money; it is being kept for me. Besides, I dare say I shall do some work as soon as I find out what I can do. I think I should like to paint; it

must be delightful to spread the rich colours on the canvas, and watch them growing into flowers and lovely women's faces. I have often dreamed of being a painter. But I cannot, unfortunately, draw at all. Bethiah used to draw very well; she made many portraits of me. Sometimes I have thought that it must be splendid to be a great orator, and to move the people. But then—Bethiah used to say—*orators have to tell lies and exaggerate and misrepresent, otherwise they cannot move the people.*'

'Don't be an orator, Paul; don't try to move the people.'

'I will not, Hetty,' he replied, virtuously and firmly. 'Sometimes I think I should like to be a preacher, but without conviction'—he went back to the old phraseology of his youth, 'that is impossible. As for being a lawyer, that is impossible, too, because I should have to study law, and I can never study anything again; I have had enough of study.' His mind went off in an unexpected line. 'I have had seven years of study such as never

any man had before, I believe. Some day perhaps, Hetty, I may tell you all about it. Seven years, during which I had to think all day long of nothing else. Other young men had friends and fun, I suppose. At least, I have heard of such things. I had no friends and no fun. I seem now to have wasted my youth. It is gone, and all that I took so much trouble to learn and to cultivate has gone too.'

'Never mind it, Paul.'

'It made me so different from other young men. Why, Hetty, when first I came here I could not understand how Tom could be always laughing and joking. I came to imitate him afterwards, but at first—what a solemn, conceited Ass I must have seemed to you.'

'No, Paul. Those were your gifts.'

'Yes, yes—my gifts. Well, Hetty, I had led a very serious kind of life for a long time—seven years. And the atmosphere of youth and beauty intoxicated me. And so—I fell in love. And about the future, dear. There is plenty of money. I don't know how much, but there must be a great deal—very likely

enough to keep us all our lives. Not that I don't want to work. Oh! Hetty, to work for you! I could clear a forest for your sake!'

'I wonder,' he went on, 'how I could have lived so long without you, Hetty. It seems to me now as if life would not have been worth living. Why, if I were to die to-morrow I should feel that I had not lived in vain, because I have loved. The dreams that I told you of—the dreams that came to me when Bethiah played—I understand them now—they were the first yearnings of a young man after love. Oh! my dear. There is nothing in the world worth thinking of beside love. My heart is full of love and of thankfulness and joy for love.'

He looked so completely happy; he spoke with such a perfect contentment: in fact, he looked and spoke as he felt—that no one would have guessed the pangs of shame he had endured only that morning in the attempt to put things in a pleasant and comfortable manner to his old playmate.

'Paul,' Hetty cried suddenly, breaking up

the Paradise, 'what shall you say to my mother?'

'I shall tell her that we are engaged, and that I am going to take you away.'

'Then we must leave her—all alone?'

He made no reply.

'Yes,' she said. 'Yes—I know, we must. Poor mother! She has something to live upon, and we have never been companions. Oh! we could not endure to bring into our own lives, Paul, the dreadful rappings and the spirits.'

'No, we will have none of the spirits with us. That is certain, Hetty.'

'Yet, Paul, it is to you that I have told the awful suspicion which has always rested like a black veil between my mother and myself. They are, after all, real spirits who rap for her. My mother may be deceived by them, but she is not a deceiver of others.'

'Lady Augusta will take care of her, Hetty—and Sibyl, and Cicely, for your sake.'

'And there is my father, Paul; it was you who brought me to him. Sometimes I wish

you had not. He is—he is—not altogether what I could wish him, is he? And he has been two or three times since; and he keeps throwing out hints that if I will go with him to America he will be able to do great things for me. And oh! he says he is in the show line. Can I ever?—she sprang to her feet and threw out her arms—‘can I ever rid myself of the show and the medium—the sham and the pretence? Paul, you will take me away from them, won’t you? Where we go, I don’t care where it is, we will never hear of this other world except as others hear of it, will we? We will consult no spirits; we will have no powers and no gifts: we will go through life seeing no more than others see. Oh! Yes, I know—to you, Paul, to you—your gifts have been precious and glorious. But to me my mother’s gifts have brought shame unutterable!’

‘Why, Hetty!’ His eyes were soft and suffused, and his cheeks were glowing, his lips were trembling with the sympathy which welled up in him at the touch of pity. ‘My

Hetty. Henceforth then there is no other world but that which you can see with your eyes, and that which you can feel with your heart—my dear, the other world which each of us will see and feel all day long. It will be the other world of each other's hearts.'

CHAPTER III.

HUSBAND AND WIFE.

THERE was not, happily, any occasion for anxiety as to Mrs. Medlock, for even while Hetty spoke of her she was re-united to her husband. Yes. Mr. Haynes Medlock, either stricken by conscience, or led by the re-awakening of affection, or guided by self-interest, had returned to his wife after eighteen years of separation. The reunion of souls once parted, the return of heart to heart, is indeed a sweet subject for contemplation.

‘Lor-a-mercy!’ cried the wife. ‘It’s Haynes!’

‘Yes, Lavinia, I’ve come back,’ said the husband.

That was all. The words are simple. The poetry lies beneath.

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It was the evening. Haynes Medlock, seated once more at his own fireside, was enjoying domestic happiness.

It steamed in a tumbler at his side, fragrant, hot, and strong. The lemon lay beside it, and the whisky bottle, only just begun, promised more domestic happiness to follow.

‘This, Lavinia,’ he said, ‘is comfort.’

In his fingers he held a churchwarden. This kind of pipe is a symbol of domestic happiness. It is leisurely to smoke—indicating tranquillity; it is fragile—indicating mutual forbearance: confusion and violence destroy it—therefore it indicates domestic peace. It cannot be removed from the lips for any length of time without going out. It, therefore, teaches the necessity of few words. Its length requires elbow-room; therefore, the children have gone to bed.

‘Yes, Lavinia,’ said Mr. Medlock, slowly, ‘I was wrong to go. You ought to have

warned me that there was money in it. If I'd stayed I could have made that money for you. Well, there is still money in it, I've a notion, now.'

'It's no use, Haynes. The profession's wasted away for want of customers. People no longer want to consult the spirits. Why, there's even palmistry cutting into it—palmistry that the gipsies used to practise. Now, that's all the fashion. The spirit-rapping trade's gone—now I'm too old to learn any other. Lucky I was able to buy the house when I did.'

'I've a notion, Lavinia. I came back with that notion, and it's stuck. First I thought it wouldn't do; then I thought it would; then I thought it wouldn't. I came home, Lavinia, because I was tired of being assistant and I wanted to be boss. I know the whole bag o' tricks, and I said to myself "If Lavinia will only join me, there's a fortune in it."'

'What is it, Haynes?'

'It's spiritualism and palmistry and fortune telling and advice and craniology and telling

character from handwriting and casting nativities all in one. You shall do the spiritualism. I can do the palmistry and the craniology—and I know a man who can cast nativities. We can't dress you up to look young, Lavinia.'

'No, you can't,' she replied, with a pathetic sniff. 'That's too late.'

'But we can dress you up to look old, my dear. In crimson velvet, with a snow-white wig, and rings upon your fingers, and a little paint under your eyes, you would look truly venerable. An old woman isn't so attractive as a young woman; but then she looks venerable. She commands respect. People believe in her.'

'You'll want capital to start with. Where's your furniture and rent and advertising to come from?'

'I'll manage that. If only we could get a young woman—Lavinia'—he jerked the pipe over his left shoulder and looked cunning—'there's Hetty.'

'Haynes! If she would! If she only would! If you could get Hetty to come with us, you would have the best clairvoyante in

the world. I've seen her under Paul's hands. She went off like a lamb the moment his eyes were upon her. She said what he wanted her to say : she stood up when he told her : she sat down again when he told her : and she remembered nothing afterwards. It's easy to find a mesmeriser, but a really good clair-voyante——'

'Lavinia! say no more—our fortune's made. Of course she'll come. When first I set eyes on that girl, that is to say, not the first time, which was one-and-twenty years ago—time flies—one-and-twenty years ago. She's a fine girl, Lavinia—a very fine girl—with such eyes and such a figure! She'll drag in all the men in the place for love, and all the women for jealousy. When first I set eyes on her, I say—but a week ago—I said to myself, says I, "young woman, if you were only in my hands"—meaning what I could make of her. But a parent without money—it's like making a law when you've got no policemen.' He heaved a deep sigh. 'Now if you'll give in, Lavinia, listen. We'll sell this house—that will put us

in funds. And we'll go across the water. Lord! what a show we'll have! With that beautiful girl dressed—how shall she be dressed? In tights?'

'Not in tights, Haynes. It isn't delicate.'

'In Syrian costume, then; we'll call her the—the—Syrian Syren. Can she sing?'

'Hetty plays and sings very well.'

'She shall sing. That shall be part of the entertainment. Mesmeriser! what do we want with a mesmeriser? I'll mesmerise her.'

'You can't.'

'Well, we can pretend. It is all the same thing.'

'No, Haynes, it isn't the same thing. You can't pretend clairvoyance—not to take in anybody who knows. You might as well pretend to spirit rapping.'

'Well, so you can. Everybody knows that.'

At that moment there were heard from behind the stove three loud and distinct raps.

Haynes Medlock jumped from his chair and upset his tumbler. 'Good Lord! Lavinia, what's that?'

'Why,' continued his wife, 'if it is just the same thing, do a lot of people go round pretending to be Mediums? No, Haynes, you take a low view of the profession. I don't say but what we have to make up a good deal. Even Paul does that, I know, with his Abyssinian business, which I wonder he can have the face to put before people who've got heads. To be sure, in that house nobody, except Sibyl, has got anything of a head. They all believe anything.'

'Who's Paul?'

'That is Herr Paulus, the most wonderful medium that ever came over. Haynes, I was beginning to disbelieve in the whole concern until I saw what he did. Chick says it's all mesmerism. Well, mesmerism does a good deal of it; but there's more than mesmerism in it. If we could get Paul there would be something in your show.'

'Paul? There was a fellow called Paolo

who used to help the old Professor. What's he like?'

'Like an Italian. Dark hair, lovely black eyes—tall and handsome.'

'It's the same man! Yes, if we could get him. Why not? We must have somebody, and the Professor's about come to the end of his rope. Why not, Lavinia? Bring me within speech of him. I did speak to the Professor, but he got on stilts at once.'

'There's some talk of his losing his power. But that's what he says himself. Therefore, it must be part of his make-up. They say he is going away. It's the talk of the servants. I always talk to the servants, Haynes, wherever I go, because there's many a little secret comes out that way, and very useful I've found it.'

'As for Hetty, now——'

'You won't find it easy to persuade Hetty. She's an unnatural daughter, Haynes. She isn't proud of her mother's distinguished position. She won't help me any way. Sometimes she says disrespectful things about the

profession. Very cruel things she has said when I've wanted her to do any little thing for me—just to pass me a roll of paper at the right moment, when it would have made all the difference between a successful séance and a failure. No, not even the crook of her little finger will that girl give me. Spirits must be helped and encouraged, and she knows it; but she won't help a bit—says it's cheating.'

'That's bad. Because we shall want the crook of all her fingers,' said her husband.

'And something's come over her. She never says anything at all now: has her breakfast and goes off to her work; comes home and goes to bed. But now she isn't grumpy any more, and her eyes are soft. She looks happy. Perhaps it's our American lodger that she's so fond of.'

'Well, Lavinia, she's got to come with us, and do what we please. Exercise your authority, Lavinia—as a mother.'

'That's all very well. But you are her father. It's your authority, not mine, that's

wanted. Let me mix you another tumbler, and don't spill it again.'

'My authority shall be exercised,' said Haynes, firmly. 'I shall command that girl. She shall obey her father. I've never commanded anybody yet, but now the time's come I shall go through with it. I will be stern, Lavinia.'

At this moment Hetty arrived.

'You here?' she said, with more surprise than welcome. 'I thought my mother was not to know that you had come back.'

'I concluded to come home,' said her father, simply. 'Take your bonnet off and sit down, Hetty. Your mother has got something to say to you.'

'That is to say, my dear, your father——'

Hetty turned from one to the other. They were afraid. They looked mean and small beside this beautiful daughter of theirs, to whom they were about to propose a life of lies.

'Well,' she said to her father, 'say what you want to say.'

'We are going to America together, your

mother and me, on business. You will come with us, Hetty, also on business. On advantageous terms, of course,' he added.

'I shall do nothing of the kind.'

'I am your father, Hetty. And your mother is—your mother. And we mean to be obeyed.'

The words were strong, but their effect was greatly marred by the manner of utterance. Also the handling of the churchwarden did not add to the authority of the words.

'I am not going to obey you. But what do you want me to go to America for?'

'Your mother and I, Hetty, are going to run a show—I mean—conduct a high class Spiritualist Variety entertainment, of an instructive character. Your mother's world-wide fame as a Medium—in crimson velvet and white hair—has preceded her across the wide waves of the Atlantic Ocean. American citizens have long been asking why they, the bigger and more important half of the Anglo-Saxon speaking race, dwelling under the flag of Liberty, should not have the opportunity

of beholding the manifestations which this renowned Medium has lavished upon her own countrymen. That opportunity will soon be granted to them. Lavinia Medlock, whose agent is the well-known Haynes Medlock, for many years largely engaged in the conduct of similar enterprises, will shortly land upon the sacred soil of Freedom, and be greeted by the citizens of that great and glorious Republic. She will be accompanied by her daughter, Miss Henrietta Medlock, a clairvoyante whose feats have been hitherto designedly kept a secret in order that she might burst with full lustre upon the enraptured gaze of the American Eagle. Henrietta is now in the bloom of her seventeenth year.' Mr. Medlock at this point, carried away by his own eloquence, rose, and assumed a position on the hearthrug, where he stood, his left thumb in his waistcoat armhole, and the left hand spread out. In his right he gracefully brandished the churchwarden. The effect of this attitude, combined with his spare figure, open frock coat, and small, insignificant

features, was imposing. 'Her seventeenth year,' he repeated. 'In her sweet seventeenth. Heaven never made a fairer creature than this favourite of the spirits. She is dark, with large and limpid eyes, charged with magnetism. Young men have been known to fall down beneath the gaze of those eyes. Constant meditation and communion with the other world have given her youthful face the lofty and abstracted air of the aged philosopher. She is nobly formed. She possesses a voice at once soft, musical and powerful. She plays and sings only music taught her by the spirits. In the hands of her father, the only operator whom she will admit, she performs the most extraordinary feats—things never before attempted—of clairvoyance. There is nothing that she cannot do. She reads letters in envelopes; she tells the numbers of bank notes; she prophesies the future; brings news of the absent; conveys messages to the dead.'

'Stop!' said Hetty. 'Enough of this nonsense. I will have nothing—nothing to do with your shameful and disgraceful cheats.'

Oh ! It has been misery enough to see what is done day after day—and to hear what is said and thought of mediums ; but to join ! to pass my life in it—oh ! ’

‘ Hetty, my dear,’ said her mother, in imploring tones, ‘ don’t be hard on us. Think—oh ! think, we are so poor, and there is a great fortune to be made. And indeed it isn’t trickery. It is only dressing up the thing artfully so as to catch the people. It must be dressed up. You are a beautiful clairvoyante, Hetty. I have seen you under Paul’s hands—the first night he came. Oh ! I could have sung for joy when I saw you Oh ! we have no right to throw away this splendid gift ; it was given to you, Hetty, so that you might make a great fortune out of it for yourself and your parents. Do you think, Hetty, your own father would ask you to do what is wrong ? ’

Her own father endeavoured to dissemble with the aid of his tumbler. But it was a feeble attempt. The involuntary smile with which he received his wife’s last question broadened to a grin.

‘It is no use,’ said Hetty, declining to answer that question. ‘Nothing—not the blackest destitution—would induce me to lead such a life. Besides,’ she added softly, ‘the matter is taken out of my hands. I am engaged.’

‘Engaged! Engaged! Oh! Hetty—Hetty. To whom?’

‘I will tell you as soon as he allows me. Yes; I am engaged. I will not insult my lover, even by listening to such proposals any longer. Oh! How can you—how can you?—both of you. How can you in your old age’—fifty seems so old to one-and-twenty; and, indeed, one is no longer quite in the first blush of early manhood at fifty—‘how can you?’ she repeated, because the conclusion of the sentence was contrary to the spirit of the Fifth Commandment.

Then she walked straight out of the room and sought the studio, where Bethiah was reading a novel, with no other companion than her lay figure.

‘Engaged! She is engaged!’ said her

mother. ‘Oh! she’s an artful creature not to tell me. Who can it be? There’s not a young man in the world that I know of that she knows. There’s Tom Langston, to be sure. But he’s engaged to Sibyl; and—and—oh! Lord! Haynes, what if it were Paul himself? It must be. There’s no one else. Oh! Haynes!’

‘Paul? Signor Paolo, as was? If it’s him,’ said her husband, moved beyond the reach of grammar, ‘if it’s him, don’t say another word about the Show. Don’t let her set him against us. If it’s him, I say, our fortune’s made, because there isn’t a cleverer or a more promising man in the Profession. She’s a lovely girl, Lavinia: in greatness and loftiness of mind she takes after her father’s family; in spiritual gifts, no doubt, after you, my dear. Humour her—if it’s him, give in to her. He’ll make her a clairvoyante fast enough. And, oh! with such a son-in-law and such a daughter, my dear Lavinia, our declining years will slide as easy as a droring-room car, replete, as the advertisements say, with every comfort. Give

in to her : humour her ; buy little things and give them to her—new gloves, for instance ; make her feel that we look up to her. And, oh ! Lavinia, be judicious. Say nothing more about the Show. Leave that to her lover. My dear, this is a joyful evening indeed.'

CHAPTER IV.

THE FIRST BLOW.

It is now my cruel duty to record the succession of cruel blows which one after the other shattered Paul's self-satisfaction. They began the very day after that blissful talk with Hetty, part of which has been preserved from oblivion. Each one was unexpected; each was more severe than its predecessor. They were blows dealt by Nemesis, who is always unexpected, always silent in her approach, and who always chooses the moment when her victim is at his happiest and his proudest, prancing gaily along the way, believing himself to be admired by everybody, exulting in his imaginary triumph.

Nothing, for instance, could exceed the respect, admiration, gratitude and affection

with which Paul was at this moment regarded in this house. No one could have been more conscious of this admiration than himself. Yet all was taken from him, in three days, as you shall hear.

It began in the study. Mr. Brudenel was going through his correspondence. Paul sat in an arm-chair with a cigarette and the paper. Peace and serenity lay upon their brows.

‘Here is a letter from Anna Petrovna—you remember her, Paul?’

‘Anna Petrovna? Of course. She gave me a letter to you. I have never quite understood whether Anna is more dupe than knave—or the opposite. You see, the two characters very often overlap. There is Lavinia Medlock, for example. She believes in everybody but herself; she envies all other mediums; and she despises herself. Anna is like Lavinia, with less conscience.’

Any one who took any interest in this young man would have observed that a great

change had fallen upon him in a single week. Things external do not alter the shape of a man's features unless he engages in a prize-fight or goes a-welshing to a racecourse. Formerly Paul's face was thoughtful, reticent, and authoritative. There was always a watchful look upon it. This watchfulness made some, like Sibyl, suspicious. To others, as to Hetty, it conveyed assurance of reserved power. Now the watchfulness had gone out of his face and the reticence. His expression was frank and candid. He told everybody, freely, that he had lost his power. That explained the change completely.

'Anna Petrovna writes to me that they have a wonderful Medium in St. Petersburg—one Olga something by name. She wishes to send her over here.' Mr. Brudenel looked dubiously at Paul, as if uncertain how he would take it.

'I thought you were not going to have anything more to do with Mediums.'

'Not with the common sort. But there are Mediums of the higher class. As for the

common kind, you yourself cleared the house of the lying spirits, Paul.'

'Yes.'

'And, of course, you would not wish us to become perfect unbelievers. After all you have yourself done here, that would be impossible.'

'I wish nothing, Mr. Brudenel. As you know, I am no longer qualified to give an opinion or to advise anybody. I know very little, but I should say that it will be time to treat the subject seriously when you get a message worth having—which tells us by means of the rappings, something we could not find out for ourselves. As for me and my Message—you saw—what you saw.'

'You found me in uncertainty, Paul, floundering among quicksands. And you placed me on the Solid Rock.'

'On the Solid Rock,' Paul repeated, but without enthusiasm.

'We have learned,' Mr. Brudenel went on, 'that there are wise men to whom space is nothing. I have been myself transported

daily in the spirit thousands of miles in a moment. We know that life is continuous, and that some have acquired the power of seeing and conversing with the spirits—you yourself could do so.'

'Perhaps. But I have lost my Power.'

'We have learned that the incidents of unearthly life have no significance unless they affect the March of the Soul. All this we have learned from you and from your friends. If the Russian medium—Olga—is able to continue this teaching, I would keep her here as long as she would consent to stay.'

Paul made no reply.

'Paul,' Mr. Brudenel went on, 'put me in communication once more with Izák Ibn Menelek. Try. Stand over me as you used to do. Look me in the eyes as you used to do. Try, Paul.'

Paul threw away his cigarette.

'I will try. But it is useless. I know it beforehand.'

It was useless. After ten minutes Paul desisted.

‘You have lost the compelling look in your eye,’ said Mr. Brudenel. ‘I thought once that I was going off; but it was only my right foot gone asleep. Do you think he will ever resume his teaching, Paul? Do you think I shall ever remember what he taught?’

‘I do not know. My Power has left me. If I call on Izák Ibn Menelek, he will not reply. I am forgetting who he is. I want you to understand that if he has used me he has now cast me aside. I have been an Instrument. I cannot advise, help, or promise you anything in the matter. I know not what is going to happen. Probably nothing. You have learned what it was intended that you should learn. Perhaps you will be left entirely to yourself. Perhaps not.’

After all, to have learned so much as Paul had taught was a considerable boon on the part of a person of whom Mr. Brudenel had never heard. If all of us felt our feet as firmly planted on the Solid Rock—what an age of Faith would be again commenced! Mr. Brudenel would have replied, but he was

interrupted by a servant who brought in a card.

‘It is our friend Athelstan Kilburn. Show Mr. Kilburn here. You remember Athelstan Kilburn, Paul. He was present at two of your evenings.’

Paul nodded.

Mr. Athelstan Kilburn was, in general, a person extremely well satisfied with himself. Men who are well satisfied with themselves frequently have loud voices. Mr. Athelstan Kilburn had a loud voice. Men who are well satisfied with themselves are frequently of a portly presence. Mr. Athelstan Kilburn was portly. But to-day he was perceptibly smaller, and his volume of voice was shrunken.

‘I am not interrupting, I hope,’ he said. ‘I know that you are always in your study at this time, Brudenel, and—and—in fact——’

‘I will return presently,’ said Paul, springing to his feet. ‘You have business with Mr. Brudenel. I will leave you.’

‘No, no,’ said Mr. Brudenel. ‘Why should

you leave us? Paul knows all my secrets—if I ever had any. Shall he stay, Kilburn? Is it very private business?’

‘Private business of your own—your own—Brudenel.’

‘Then stay, Paul. Now, Kilburn, take a chair and go on. What is the matter, my dear friend? You look ill. What is it?’

‘I am ill. Who would not be ill? Brudenel, I am come for an explanation.’

‘Certainly. What am I to explain?’

‘It is now five weeks ago since I sought your counsel on some investments. You wrote me a letter. Have you forgotten that letter?’

Mr. Brudenel jumped in his chair.

‘Good Heavens!’ he cried, ‘I had clean forgotten that letter.’

‘I will read it. Then you will remember. Then Herr Paulus will know. Then you will be able to give me an explanation.’ Mr. Kilburn pulled out his pocket-book and turned over the papers. He found the letter he wanted, and opened it and read it slowly.

“ ‘Dear Kilburn,’ this,’ he explained to Paul, ‘has been our style and title between each other for forty years. It is more than forty years since we became united by the bonds of a common pursuit. During the whole of that time we have been the closest friends. I will now go on. You shall draw your own inference, Herr Paulus, and Brudenel will perhaps be able to give an explanation. “Dear Kilburn, since parting with you I have considered the question of your investments. It is true that gas keeps up and that water is a thing which everybody must use. At the same time the interest you get for your money is not much. It occurs to me that you would do better by purchasing as many shares as you can get—they do not often come into the market—of my old Company, Brudenel and Company. At present prices they bring in about five and a quarter per cent. The shares have gone slightly up every year since the Company was formed. I hold myself shares to the extent of many thousand pounds. Think this

over. Yours ever, Cyrus Brudenel." Think this over,' repeated Mr. Kilburn; 'I did think it over.'

'Good Heavens!' Mr. Brudenel cried, a second time, 'I had completely forgotten that letter.'

'I did think it over,' Mr. Kilburn repeated, hammering at his point. 'And I bought those shares. I am not a rich man, Herr Paulus, but for a bachelor I have been comfortable. Now I am a poor man, and for the rest of my life I shall be uncomfortable. I took that advice, Herr Paulus, and I invested the half of my fortune in that Company. It is bankrupt, and the shareholders will not get one penny.'

'I had altogether forgotten that letter,' said Mr. Brudenel, a third time. 'How could I have forgotten it?'

'He might have made a mistake,' Mr. Kilburn continued to address Paul. 'Anybody may make mistakes. But on the very day—the very day—that he wrote that letter, he wrote also to his banker to sell out his own

shares if possible, and immediately. Well, sir?' he turned sharply on Mr. Brudenel, 'your explanation, if you please. As I take it—as it seems to me—you deliberately put an old friend, one who you knew would act on your advice, to buy shares in a Company that you no longer trusted. You knew that demand would keep up the price. You sacrificed your old friend for the sake of keeping up the price. That is what it looks like. I say no more. It looks like that sort of thing—men do these things constantly. Oh! I know that very well. We must expect them to be done. But I did not think that such things would have been done by Cyrus Brudenel, by whose side I have sat for forty years and received the communications of the other world.'

'This is dreadful,' said the unfortunate Cyrus. 'Paul, help me—advise me. How can I explain it? I did write that letter, Kilburn—I did write that letter. I remember writing it very well. I gave you, as I thought, the best advice.'

‘Yet you wrote the other letter on the same day.’

‘Did I? Was it on the same day? You are sure it was the same day? Kilburn, I declare to you that I—I have no explanation.’ He remembered in time that no spiritualist would accept the only explanation he had to offer. Paul offered to explain. ‘Mr. Brudenel,’ he said, ‘was made to sell out those shares, against his own knowledge, by unseen protectors.’

Mr. Kilburn groaned and shook his head.

‘Not by the Spirits,’ he said. ‘You may think yourself very happy if you get a plain answer to a plain question from the Spirits. I’ve been questioning for forty years, and I would not trust them an inch. As for Brudenel being made to write a letter by the Spirits, that—you’ll excuse me, Herr Paulus—is rubbish.’

‘But there is no other way of explaining the circumstance.’

‘Spirits have very little power at the best,’ said this experienced person. ‘I have known

one lift a pencil and write with it, but that is the most I have seen. As for taking a man and making him write against his will, that is rubbish. I have been directed by an old and trusted friend to invest money in a concern which he knew to be rotten. Oh! Brudenel, to think that you—of all men—could have done such a thing.'

Mr. Kilburn rushed out of the room.

'Paul, can't you explain this?'

Paul changed colour and looked confused. He understood, for the first time, the great law of political economy, that if one person is saved another is lost. He had saved one man and ruined another. He thought himself so clever, but he had forgotten this simple thing, and he had involved his unfortunate friend in a situation out of which there was no way except one, and that way no spiritualist would accept.

'Paul, can't you help me?'

'No; there is no help. It is most unfortunate.'

Yet he had thought himself so clever—

so wonderfully clever. And now all Mr. Brudenel's most intimate friends would have to believe that their leader had entrapped one of themselves—a friend of forty years—to his destruction, in order to save himself from loss.

CHAPTER V.

THE SECOND BLOW.

WHEN the tardy Avenger at length arrives within reach of the sinner and warms to his work, his blows generally fall in an increasing scale of weight and rapidity. The first blow, for instance, caused a certain dismay and mental confusion. It was a nasty one from an unexpected quarter. It left an uneasiness behind it—as used often to happen to school-boys in the old days. The second was heavier and much more painful and came more unexpectedly.

In the afternoon there was Merriment—Merriment if you please in the House of Silence and of communicating Spirits. It came from the girls' room. No more talk, there, of Menelek and Izák the Falasha, and the An-

cient Way: no more solemn uplifting of the heart to the contemplation of the things behind the Veil. The Veil was hanging down, as low as it could go. Nobody tried to lift it—or to peep behind it. Nobody regarded it. Here was a change.

There were three girls and two young men. One of them was learning to dance, and he was so stupid that he made them laugh.

‘Oh! cried Sibyl, springing up from the piano. ‘Take my place, Hetty, and I will try. Now—watch Tom and Cicely’—they were illustrating the art of waltzing for an example. To dance—at any time—with one who could dance well, was the greatest pleasure in the world for the blind girl. ‘See how they turn—watch their feet. You see: he doesn’t catch his heels, and he keeps time.’

‘But I can’t get round without catching mine. I can beat time, but when I turn round to time I am lost.’

‘Nonsense—now—one—two—three. One—two—three. Well—that is better—now—ah! your heels again!’

Paul sat down and laughed.

‘I am too stupid. Give me up, Sibyl.’

‘No, try again. You must learn to waltz before the dance next week.’

They were going to have a dance. The House of Silence, sacred to all the spirits, actually going to have a dance! One might as well dance in a Chapter House, or in the solemn cloisters of a cathedral, or in the awful halls of a Bishop’s palace.

In the old times—now a week old—when the House, purged of the evil and mocking spirits brought by Chick, was still haunted by solemn whispers and sacred messages, a dance would have been impossible. How could Sages come from Abyssinia to teach wisdom, save fortunes, sign cheques, transfer shares in the most supernatural manner, while the young people danced? With what heart could the Vestal of the Cause, while she was still a Vestal, spin round to the tinkling of a piano? But the Message had been delivered, the book was closed, there would be no more miracles, the spirits and Sages had gone, the house was

cleared and ready if need be for secular purpose. And there was going to be a dance !

‘I must give up trying,’ said Paul. ‘I am too old to learn. Do you know I have never been to a dance and have never even seen one?’

‘Never seen a dance?’ said Sibyl.

‘Well, I have seen the Germans dance on Sunday evenings, and I have seen dancing on the tight rope at a circus. But I have never been present at a dancing party of Society.

‘Is it possible?’ Sibyl’s voice conveyed another question, which it was not manners to ask. The question was ‘Where in the world were you brought up?’ Paul perceived that question.

‘Since,’ he said, ‘I have lost my powers, I have recovered the memory of the past. I now remember the whole of my own history and I find myself forgetting the later periods. What is the use of remembering things which have left no trace behind?’

‘And now,’ said Tom, ‘you have got so far as to remember never to have been to a dance.’

‘Would you like to hear something about myself? Perhaps it would be more amusing than trying to make me waltz.’

‘Tell us all that you please,’ said Cicely, ‘about yourself.’

They all gathered round him, as attentive as if he were about to narrate the exploits of Prince Menelek.

‘I was born,’ he began, ‘in a little New England town, not far from Boston. It would be no use telling you the name. It was a very little place; the principal people were the minister, the doctor, the lawyer, the school teachers, the general store-keeper, and the hotel keeper. We were taught religion at the Sunday school, and it was hoped that we should get conviction and become church members. The creed of the New England ministry town is narrow, you know. As for dancing, it is considered impossible for those young people who take any thought of their future state. You do not know, perhaps—I am sure you do not understand—how narrow my people were.’

‘What were your amusements then?’

‘There was sleighing in the winter, and there were gatherings connected with the chapel. Sometimes a lecturer, or a circus, or a show of some kind came along. As for myself I read all the books I could get, and I tried to write. Yes—I wrote—I dreamed all day long that I should become great and famous.’ Here Tom and Sibyl’s eyes met. ‘What did I tell you?’ was conveyed in Tom’s glance. ‘I thought I would be a great poet. Oh! no one knows the yearning that was in my heart for distinction. It was not that I longed to do great work so much as to obtain distinction.’

‘And now,’ said Sibyl, softly, ‘is that yearning gone?’

‘Yes,’ he replied, frankly, ‘it is wholly gone. I want nothing now beyond the common lot, with a corner in the village churchyard when I have had my life and the joys of life.’ Hetty blushed. Was she not going to be the chief joy of his life?

‘It has quite left me. But, then—Oh! it

was a madness. I took my manuscripts to New York when I was seventeen, and set up business as a distinguished poet in a cheap boarding-house.'

'Well?'

'Well, the same idea had occurred to many hundreds of young fellows at the same moment. I believe I came at an unlucky time. Perhaps the editors and publishers are not always pelted with so many poems written by the distinguished poets of the future. No one would have my poems. I got rejection from everybody, sometimes with the intimation that I might have my MS. if I chose to call for it, and sometimes without even so much grace.'

'And what did you do then?' asked Sibyl.

'I stayed at my boarding-house till all my money was gone. Even the rejection of my poems gave me less humiliation than the thought that I should have to creep home and acknowledge my failure, and try something prosaic and undistinguished. Then an accident happened. I fell in with a certain learned

gentleman acquainted with—with much knowledge of the kind not studied by most people——’

‘The Ancient Way,’ Tom suggested.

‘He made me his pupil. It was he who introduced me to the Friends—you know who I mean.’ Only a week ago Paul would have referred to these sages with a confident air, instead of the hesitation with which he now spoke of them.

‘Yes, we know, Paul,’ said Sibyl. ‘But they have thrown you aside now, you know. They belong to the part of the past which is to be forgotten, do they not?’

‘Yes,’ said Paul, quickly; ‘let them be forgotten.’

‘But why did they throw you aside?’ asked Cicely. ‘They were so wise and so great. Why did they throw you aside?’

‘Because I disobeyed them. They warned me against one thing—to keep the Powers with which I was entrusted, it was above all necessary that I should keep my mind clear and calm. Therefore, when I allowed my

mind to be entirely absorbed with a certain Thought, I lost those Powers.'

'Could you,' asked Cicely, the only one who could not observe Hetty's self-conscious blush—she knew what that Thought was, you see—'could you not regain your Powers?'

'Yes—perhaps—I do not know. I might again after many days, and when I had torn the Thought out of my heart.'

'Don't do that,' said Cicely, quickly. 'I love to think of the old Paul, but I could not have him back again at such a sacrifice. Do not make a girl unhappy by ceasing to love her.'

'You knew, then, Cicely, what I meant?'

'Your words could have but one meaning. You will tell me some day more about her.'

'Yes, some day, soon, Cicely,' said Paul.

'And, Paul,' said Sibyl, 'we are all so much interested in you, and so grateful for all you have done,—and, oh! so unfeignedly thankful for the loss of those Powers of yours, and so anxious that you should never regain

them, that we want to know what you are going to do next.'

'I am enjoying my holiday—the first I have had for seven years—and I hardly like to think what I shall do next. Frankly, I cannot tell you. I must go back to America and find out what I can do, and if it is possible for me, even now, to learn a trade of some kind. America is a hard country for a man without a profession—it is a far harder country than England. Yet I shall get on, somehow, That is all I have to tell you, good people.'

Presently, after a little silence, Cicely spoke :

'We shall miss you, Paul. Often in the night I lie awake and listen to the voice—of the former Paul, I mean—telling us great and noble things and lifting up our souls. He is gone, but the memory of his words remains. Do you remember them, you new Paul?'

'I remember something. Do not dwell too much upon these things.'

'I must. They have sunk into my soul. Oh ! it is a beautiful thing to be very sure

and certain of the world which lies around us. I cannot see the world you see, but I can feel the other—the spirit world. When I am alone I seem to hear their voices and to feel the rustling of their robes against me as they pass. Your words opened the other world for me. You say that you have lost your Powers, because you have fallen in love. I do not understand that. It seems to me as if, when people are in love, they should feel all the more in harmony with the whole creation. How *could* Love make you lose your Powers, Paul? You have told us, over and over again, how all the world, the other world, is full of Love. Could Love destroy Powers that made you see and know these things?’

‘Perhaps it was disobedience,’ said Sibyl, seeing Paul hesitate. ‘Come, Cicely, we must not question too closely. Let us remember what was pure and noble in his teaching. The rest may go.’

It was a new thing that Sibyl should become Paul’s defender. But since the great day of Restoration, with that unexpected letter

to Tom, she felt bound by no common ties of gratitude. Besides, the supernatural pretensions were abandoned, and she had penetrated Hetty's secret. This made her more than grateful. She was interested in a love story enacted before her own eyes.

'Since,' said Paul, presently, 'there is nothing else worth having except love, surely those powers of mine were well lost even in bringing love to one girl.'

'They were, Paul,' said Sibyl. 'All the fine phrases in the world are nothing compared with one good deed. In the finest phrases I have ever heard in this house—which is the home of phrases—it has always seemed to me that I detected insincerity. The men who talk are not the men who act. It is better to act than to exhort. Your splendid talk about the Ancient Wisdom, Paul, with which you set Cicely's heart aglow, is it worth the truthful plain life of a simple man who works and does his duty?'

Paul made no reply. Only a week before he would have been ready with an answer

based upon the wisdom learned of his unknown friends. Now he said nothing; but he knew very well what Sibyl meant.

While they sat there, quiet and grave, the door was suddenly opened and Cicely's brother, the terrible Sir Percival, stood before them in his rough sailor's dress. His eyes gleamed with the light of fanaticism. He stalked through the circle and laid his hand upon his sister's arm.

'Cicely,' he said, 'I am sent once more to warn you. Fly from this house of witchcraft. Fly from those who converse with evil spirits and make inquiry of the Devil.'

Cicely shrank from him in terror.

'Percy,' said Tom, 'you are quite mistaken. There are no more witches, and we have left off making inquiries.'

'I know the house of old. Cicely, come away from it. Leave the service of the Devil.'

'We have left that service, Percy,' Tom answered for her again. 'Exchanged, you know, sold out.'

‘You are a scoffer. Cicely, it is to you I speak. Listen.’

He delivered his soul. If he had been addressing an impenitent Magdalen, a person steeped in crime from his youth up, he could not have used language stronger and more fervid. Its violence terrified Cicely but left her otherwise unmoved. You may call a young lady a sinner, and remembrance of certain little sins may fall upon her soul and convict her and make her feel small and ashamed—which is a wholesome form of penitence. But to speak to a girl as if she had pranced gaily through the whole of the Decalogue is an overstatement of the case, and therefore weakens it.

Paul presently interrupted him.

‘Have you not spoken quite long enough?’ he said. ‘That kind of talk may do for your sailors, but what is the good of it for young ladies? You may terrify your sister, but you will not persuade her with your bluster.’

‘I remember you. I know you now,’ said Sir Percival, with quite a new light in his eyes.

‘Why do you come here?’ Paul went on, not observing that change. ‘You told me you had neither brother nor sister. Why do you seek out your sister, then? She is happy; she is innocent; she is full of the religion of love. As for your religion of terror, she does not want it. Leave her in peace. I am very sorry that I asked you to see her.’

‘I thought I remembered you. Cicely, one word more. If you will not listen to the voice of religion, will you listen to the voice of prudence?’

‘I will listen to anything, Percival, if you will desist from your terrible language.’

‘This house is the abode of liars, impostors, and common rogues. Come out of it. Come with me and I will find you somewhere a home among Christian people. Come, Cicely, this is no house for a girl who——’

‘Don’t go too far, Percival,’ said Sibyl. ‘There are limits to our patience even with you. As for Cicely, she will choose whether she will stay with her old friends, or whether she will go with you.’

‘I shall stay here with my friends,’ said Cicely.

‘Tom.’ Sir Percival was no longer a fanatic preacher, nor was he a sailor, though in a sailor’s dress; he was now an English gentleman, calm, self-contained, and speaking with due carefulness. He looked down at Paul with a scorn and contempt which even his blind sister might have felt. ‘Tom,’ he repeated, ‘do you know this fellow? May I ask if he is a friend of yours?’

Tom hesitated. Could he, in fact, truthfully aver that he knew Paul, or that he regarded him as a friend?

‘Herr Paulus,’ he replied, ‘has been a guest of Lady Augusta for six weeks or so. We are deeply indebted to him for a great and signal service.’

‘You do not, then, know who and what he is. It was in New York, three years ago, I was persuaded to see one of the Medium fellows. This Medium was an old man who told lies as fast as he could utter them. With him—the Medium’s Cad—was this fellow,

dressed in black velvet. They called him Signor Paolo. While the old man talked, this fellow played pranks. And this is the kind of man who sits day by day with my sister. A rascally Medium's Cad !'

Paul sprang to his feet with burning cheeks and flaming eyes. But Tom stepped between.

'Enough, enough. Percy, you have your answer. Go.'

'A Medium's Cad !' Sir Percival repeated. 'He and his master pretended to consult the spirits. They sold their answers ; people went to ask them questions ; they lived by their cheats. Is this, Tom, a man who should be invited to companionship with my sister ?'

'Percival,' said Sibyl, 'you are under the greatest obligations to this gentleman. Had it not been for him Cicely would be now a pauper. Whatever be his past history, in this house—where there is no more inquiry of any oracle—there can be nothing but gratitude for him.'

'A Medium's Cad ;' said Sir Percival for the fourth time. 'I have told you who he

was, and what he was doing. Make him your friend, then, if you please; I have no more to say.'

He left the room as a gentleman, not as a fanatic preacher.

Paul sank into a chair, pale and trembling.

He could not even make an effort to conceal his agitation and his confusion. 'It is true,' he gasped. 'What he told you was true. I was pupil to the man I told you of. He had great powers; he had great knowledge; he taught me: it is true, also, that he made money by his powers. Have I made money here? I ask you, all of you, what use have I made of my powers? Was it for money that I came here? Have I asked any of you for money? Have I taken money?'

'No, Paul, no,' said Sibyl; 'calm yourself. It was not for money that you came here. Oh, the past is over and done with. It is dead; forget it, Paul. Let us all forget the words that have been used. Your past is dead, Paul; our gratitude remains.'

Paul rose from his chair. He staggered

as he stood ; he seemed like one about to reel and fall. Hetty sprang up and caught him in her arms. ‘ Paul ! ’ she cried, ‘ you are my Paul ; your life is mine—your future life. Oh ! the past—the past—Paul, forget it.’

Tom left the room, followed by Sibyl. They left him there with the two women who loved him ; one because for a brief space he had been a prophet, and the other because she was a woman and he was a man, and because he loved her.

CHAPTER VI.

THE THIRD BLOW.

IN the silent watches of the night the words of Sir Percival came back to the unfortunate Paul. They were shouted into his ear. ‘A Medium’s Cad.’ To be called a cad of any kind, even in the Eton boy’s sense—that all persons who are not old or present members of that seminary are cads—is humiliating. It seems as if no one who is really a cad—say a ‘Gym’ cad, or a Racket Court cad, or an omnibus cad, or a touting cad—could ever be able to hold up his head. But to be a Medium’s Cad! Is it possible to descend much lower? When one actually is a Medium it is certainly best to magnify the office, and be Medium the Magnificent. Paul had been such a Medium—he had retired; the post had al-

ready lost its imaginary splendour, and to be called a Medium's Cad!

All his own doing—his own officious desire to prove his power—it was none other than himself who had brought this blow. Why had he ever assisted in the restoration of this man to his sister? Why, when he found and proved the manner of the man, had he not left him alone? He cursed his own short-sighted meddling—he rolled about in his bed a prey to the most poignant reproaches and the vainest regrets. Because, whatever had been said by Sibyl in her newly-born kindness, everybody knew now that he had been a Medium's Cad. He might, of course, dress up the situation, but there was the plain statement, and they all knew it to be true.

When a man stalks about solemnly, wrapped in a cloak of authority, puts forward claims to supernatural power, and to wisdom derived from other sources than those accessible to the ordinary student, he is raised above the gibes, even those of such a fanatic as Sir

Percival. These things may be said behind his back ; they generally are said of every person who has risen above his fellows. But Paul was now no more than an ordinary man ; worse off than most, because his past history was a load upon his shoulders which made him stumble and stagger—every stumble a fresh disgrace, and every fall a new humiliation.

More humiliations were to follow.

Next morning, for instance, he was confronted by a housemaid, her face tied up with a handkerchief. Beside her and behind her were other maids, anxious to witness a miracle of healing.

‘Oh ! sir,’ she cried. ‘I’ve got the tooth-ache dreadful.’

He turned pale. Twice already he had cured this damsel, in both cases assuaging the pain so that minutes afterwards she tripped it merrily, and would have sung as she tripped it but for fear of Lady Augusta. Now he could do nothing.

‘You’ve cured me twice, sir,’ she said.

‘Oh ! please sir, it’s worse than either of the times before.’

‘I—I can’t cure you any more, my good girl,’ Paul replied, looking foolish. ‘I’m very sorry. But I’m really unable to cure you.’

‘Oh ! sir, it won’t take a minute for you. It’s nothing for you to do. Last time you only looked at me and it was gone.’

‘I can’t—I have forgotten the way. I mean, I can’t do it. Go to the dentist and have it out. I shall never be able to cure anybody again.’

He fled, leaving the afflicted one overwhelmed with disappointment. What had she done that he would not heal her as before ? What did he mean by saying that he could not cure anybody any more ?

But Paul was humiliated. It was a small thing, but up to this day the servants had regarded him with the awe and wonder which belong to him who works miracles. Now he would work no more miracles : he was no better than an ordinary visitor. It is sad indeed to take the lower place.

This was before breakfast. After that meal was it fancy or was Lady Augusta distinctly colder in her manner? He proposed to go out and spend the day somewhere. At the door he encountered Emanuel Chick. The worthy creature was in a rage; he was in one of those rages which are called blind. Now, in a blind rage a man does not heed his speech. He says what comes uppermost.

‘Oh!’—Emanuel Chick roared this interjection. ‘Oh! it’s you, is it? And it is all your doing! You made up your mind from the beginning that I was to be shoved out of the way. Oh! yes, the old friends were to be shoved out of the way to make room for you. And if need be we were to be ruined. Now, Mr. Paul, or Herr Paulus, whatever you please to call yourself, I’m going to see Mr. Brudenel, and you will come along with me—or I’ll drag you along.’

‘Mr. Brudenel, I dare say, is in his study. You will find him there. I will go along, Mr. Chick, without any compulsion.’

He was curious to learn what Mr. Chick

wanted to say, and followed him into the study. He observed, as the medium went before, that he walked with head down, swinging his shoulders and squaring his elbows, as one who is resolved on something desperate.

Mr. Brudenel was not alone. Sibyl and Tom were with him, and they were conversing cheerfully about dances, weddings, festivities, and such things long forgotten in this house of silence.

‘What is it, Chick?’ asked Mr. Brudenel impatiently. The study was not a place where he was accustomed to interruption. ‘What do you want? What does he want, Paul?’

‘I’ll tell you, sir. In one moment. Give me a minute. I’ve run all the way. I’ve been out of town. On business, and most beautiful manifestations were the result. And on my return I learnt the dreadful news.’

‘What is it, then?’

‘I am ruined, Mr. Brudenel. That’s all. Ruined is the word. And through you. Oh! Nothing but that. Ruin and wreck. And

through you. Through you. No doubt to oblige this young smooth-spoken villain who came from America or somewhere to delude and cheat you out of your money—smooth-spoken as he is. Yah!’

‘You ruined! Through me!’

‘I had two thousand pounds saved. After a hard life—nobody knows better than you—I’d managed to scrape together two thousand pounds. I was going to retire from business. Think, sir, what it was to me when every young bantam-cock who could play a set of new-fangled tricks was preferred to the steady honest old Medium—and now I’ve lost it all.’

‘Good Heavens!’ said Mr. Brudenel. ‘You don’t mean to tell me that you had shares in the company, too?’

‘Why—didn’t you advise me? Didn’t I act on your advice only five weeks ago? I have your very letter! I’ve got it in my pocket.’

Like Mr. Athelstan Kilburn, Chick produced a letter.

‘Here is your letter, sir. I’ve kep it for-

tunately. Now, sir, I don't think you will deny that this is your own handwriting. And the very day after you wrote it—I heard from a young gentleman in the City—the very day after you wrote this letter, your own shares, all your own shares, were sold. Oh! he knows it for a fact. So that while you were actually writing the letter you knew that the company was going to bust up, and you were going to save yourself. Oh! Mr. Brudenel, to think of the many, many times that we've sat around the table in a circle while the blessed spirruts sent us their messages and the spirrut music played and our hearts were warmed! After all these manifestations that you—you—above all men, a gentleman and all, should play us such a turn!

Mr. Brudenel said nothing.

'I will read your letter,' the man went on. 'Perhaps the hearing of it will refresh your memory as to the writing of it.'

'“Dear Chick.” “Dear Chick.” In the friendliness of it—who would have suspected?' 'If, as you say, you are dissatisfied with the

safety of your mortgage and have called up your money, I am sure you cannot do better than buy shares, if you can get them, in my old company—Brudenel and Company. The shares have been going up steadily ever since the company was started, and even at the present prices I believe you can get a trifle over five per cent. Any stockbroker will find out for you if there are shares in the market.

‘Yours faithfully,

‘CYRUS BRUDENEL.’

‘This is truly terrible,’ Mr. Brudenel cried, looking at the letter and the date. ‘Yes, it is quite unaccountable—quite. I wrote this letter—I remember it now—and the letter to Athelstan Kilburn in the afternoon before dinner. And on the same day, the very same day, I wrote the letters which I do not remember, for the selling out of the shares. It is truly wonderful. No—Chick. I’ve no explanation to offer. I have nothing to say.’

He sat down, and rapped his knuckles with his eyeglasses.

‘That is, I have an explanation,’ he added, ‘but you would not accept it.’

It was by some inscrutable working of instinct that Mr. Brudenel arrived at this knowledge. Mr. Emanuel Chick would certainly not accept the explanation offered to Mr. Kilburn. No one, in fact, is more stubbornly incredulous concerning supernatural forces, other than his own—than the ordinary medium of commerce. You might as well look for belief in magic from a conjuror. He believes nothing; he has no kind of feeling, for instance, as regards ghosts; he would set up his tent calmly in the most ancient and lonely churchyard; he would wrap himself in a blanket, and go to sleep in a charnel house with a lighted candle stuck in a skull, and hundreds of skulls grinning at him, miles away from any other human creature, without the slightest tremor of his nerves. To tell Emanuel Chick that his old patron had been made to write that, or any other letter, by the spirits, would have been an insult to his understanding.

‘Well, sir,’ said the man roughly, ‘what are you going to do for me? You have ruined me. That you can’t deny. You sold out your own shares while you recommended me to put in my money. That you can’t deny. And me, grown old in your service, though you’ve left off employing me now, what are you going to do for me?’

‘I don’t know.’ The justice of the claim was not to be disputed, nor the accuracy of the statements. ‘I don’t know, Chick. I can’t say. I will think. Go away now.’

The man made no sign of going away.

‘I haven’t got the money,’ he said sullenly, ‘for the quarter’s rent, which is seven pounds five. I owe for a ton and a half of coal, which is thirty-five shillings. I’ve got no engagements; business is terrible slack. And you’ve ruined me.’

Mr. Brudenel sighed and took a cheque book from his drawer.

‘Here,’ he said, ‘take this cheque. It will serve you for the present.’

‘Two thousand pounds, at four per cent.,

Mr. Chick replied, looking at the cheque, 'is eighty pounds a year. This is the first quarter. I will call again, Mr. Brudenel. You and me have been very friendly, and a lawyer between us would break friendship, as one may say. Good morning, sir.'

On this occasion no one looked at Paul. When the message of the bank book revealed the sequestration of the money, everybody looked at him. Now everyone looked away from him. It was as if a look would have been construed into a reproach.

'If one man saves his money, another man must lose it,' said Tom. 'We have saved thirty-five thousand pounds, therefore other people have lost exactly that same amount. Mr. Athelstan Kilburn has lost, it appears, eight thousand, and Chick two, by our action and our advice. It seems to me, sir, that reparation will have to be made to Chick, at any rate.'

Mr. Brudenel shook his head sorrowfully. Why, when the spirits made him sell those shares, did they not also prevent the writing

of those letters? It was true that his feet stood at last upon the Solid Rock, but still . . . there was a sense of incompleteness. Paul offered no explanation, but he looked unhappy.

At this moment a card was brought to Mr. Brudenel.

‘Gentleman says he won’t take a minute, sir. Wants to see you and Herr Paulus together.’

It was Mr. James Berry who followed on the heels of the man and stood at the open door, hat in hand, bowing pleasantly.

‘Berry!’ cried Brudenel. ‘Here is another of them! Are you here to say that you are ruined too?’

‘No, sir, no. It is only this morning that I learnt, to my great joy, that you had been advised to sell out of the company in time. No doubt it was this same adviser—my benefactor—who saved me from ruin’—he waved his hat gracefully in the direction of Paul—‘Herr Paulus. And I came round, sir, to

thank him—in your presence, Mr. Brudenel, sir.’

‘I don’t quite understand, Berry.’

‘I’d been in your service, sir, your father’s service, and yours, and in the service of the company for fifty years. If anybody except the spirits had told me that the company would fail I should have laughed in his face. But I’ve always been accustomed to ask the spirits, through Mrs. Medlock, and when I was warned day after day by a man who ought to have known, being in the general manager’s own office, and when I could get no satisfaction at all from the spirits, but entire silence or silliness—as nobody knows better than you, sir, will happen at times—I grew fidgety first, and frightened next. And Lavinia, who is truthfulness itself, confessed that she could do no more, but offered to give my case to Herr Paulus.’

‘How long ago?’

‘Some weeks ago.’ This was two weeks before Mr. Brudenel’s sale was effected. ‘And I wrote my case, and give it to Lavinia. And

next day I got my orders. I was commanded to sell at once.'

'Did you,' asked Tom, 'tell Herr Paulus the name of the company?'

'I did not, sir. It would have seemed black treachery in me to hint in a letter that I had suspicions of this company, which has been my livelihood. No, sir, I put the case and I got my answer. Herr Paulus did not know the name of the company, and I understand that he is a complete stranger to London. The advice was given by the spirits, his friends, without his knowing anything of the company.'

Paul coughed gently. It was not in human nature to avoid calling attention, however gently, to the triumph of the moment. He had not known anything of the company.

'It was my little all that was saved,' Mr. Berry went on with emotion. 'As for my pension, of course that stopped with the company. It is only three per cent. I get on my money now, and it's a sad blow; but I can live on what I've got, and I'm saved from

the workhouse—saved, sir, by Herr Paulus, whom I desire to thank in your presence, sir, and in the belief that he has saved you too.’

‘Indeed he has, Berry,’ Mr. Brudenel replied. ‘We owe everything to Herr Paulus.’

‘Sir,’ Mr. Berry addressed the blushing Paul, ‘may I venture—so far—sir—may I presume to touch your hand? Ah! sir, you are young yet, and have a great career of usefulness before you, with the help of the spirits—a great career. Go on, sir; scatter blessings; do good all around; bring their help to bear upon sufferers; ward off dangers. Oh! What would one give for a day—only a day—of such powers as you possess!’

‘I am glad—truly glad,’ said Paul, ‘to have been able to do something for you at least.’

‘Something indeed! And not to know the name of the company! Next day, to be sure, talking it over with Lavinia, she found out that you had put two and two together.’ Paul withdrew his hand and suddenly be-

trayed every sign of confusion. 'To be sure,' this foolish old man went on; 'when you'd been told that I was in the service of a shipping company, formerly the property of one man and then of his two sons and then turned into a company, it was easy to guess.'

'Yes,' said Paul. 'You think so, I dare say. Good morning, Mr. Berry.'

And again nobody looked at Paul when Mr. Berry had gone, and Mr. Brudenel in his chair rapped his knuckles with his eyeglasses—one who is mentally wrestling with the giant Doubt. And nobody looked at Paul.

CHAPTER VII.

THE FOURTH BLOW.

I do not quite know how Paul got off the stage after that situation. He did not know himself. He only remembered that he looked up and met Sibyl's eyes, and they were full of pity, and that the others were not looking at him. Then he murmured something and went out of the room with Mr. James Berry, whom he left at the door.

It is not enough for a man to say that the past is gone, done, finished, over. Every man's past—his boyhood, his manhood, his old thoughts, his old deeds, his words—lives in his memory and clings to him like the fabled shirt which could not be torn off. Sometimes that shirt burns and tortures and eats into the quivering flesh; but it cannot be

taken off. Sometimes it is a soft, warm, and comfortable cloak with which to encounter cold December blasts ; and it cannot be blown off or taken away. When the man dies, what becomes of the living past ?

Everywhere he saw detection, exposure, and contempt, and always from some unseen and unsuspected hand. It was known that he had been connected with a New York spiritualist—a Medium's Cad—oh ! ye gods, to have been called a Medium's Cad ! It was known that he had learnt before the sale of the shares the shaky condition of the company, and all along he had posed as the most ignorant man in the world concerning companies ! The very servants looked at him with eyes of contempt ; from every quarter he felt the cold nipping wind of contempt.

Men have proved themselves capable of bearing any kind of misfortune except one. They cannot bear contempt at any age. Contempt maddens. To escape contempt, Spartacus and his friends braved the might of the Roman Republic. To escape contempt men

will march to the cannon's mouth. But when contempt is served out as a ration or a helping of Fate, man bows his head and dies, or he slinks into a corner and hides.

And no one, certainly, is an object of greater or more universal contempt than the pretended trafficker in things supernatural when he is found out. Many things may be forgiven. The author of a play that is damned is presently allowed to walk with head erect. A man may steal a pig and yet redeem the respect of his fellow creatures. A statesman may eat all his words and yet continue to find a faithful following—some statesmen do nothing else. But a man who has been found out in spiritualistic trickery remains an object of contempt. And Paul saw in himself an object of this contempt. Once outside the pretences with which he had clothed himself, as a starving player struts the stage and believes himself to be king and demigod, Paul had believed in those pretences—he was as quick as any others to see the past in all its true ugliness. The contempt did not exist in two

hearts at least. As one pretence after another was laid bare, one woman's heart was filled with pity and another's with love, but there was no contempt.

Since he felt that way it was natural for him to turn his steps in the direction of Beaumont Street. That tie should be broken at once and for ever.

‘Yes;’ he concluded, ‘I will not hear a single word. I have left the horrible, detestable, contemptible profession.’

‘So?’ The old man had listened without a word of interruption, though his face grew darker and darker. ‘So? You have left the profession, Paul?’

‘I have left it. I wish to Heaven that I had never entered it! Better have gone before the mast—or weighed out sugar; better—anything—anything.’

‘Ungrateful Paul!’

‘It is over at last. I have done with it. Oh! what a relief—what a relief to feel that I have done with it at last!’

‘You have found some other profession, Paul?’

‘Not yet. There is plenty of time. I can look about me.’

‘You have found a patron with money, then; as well as a wife without?’

‘No. What need of a patron? I am come to draw my money. Give me my money; I will take it away with me. Let me regulate my accounts.’

‘Your money? Your money?’ The old man looked him steadfastly in the face from his white shaggy eyebrows. ‘What money? What accounts?’

‘My money—my share.’

‘Oh! your money? This is interesting. Wait a little; we will come to that question afterwards. Now, Paul, do you think—I ask you seriously and without any anger on account of your hot words—do you think you are using me well in this matter? In your new-fangled notions about truth and honesty I think you have forgotten my claims?’

‘What are your claims?’

‘Let us examine the position. Seven years ago you came to me quite poor and quite ignorant. During that long time you have been my pupil. I have kept you and clothed you. I have taught you all you know—nay, I have taught you things that you could never have learnt except from me. Is this true, Paul?’

He spoke gravely and earnestly.

‘It is quite true. I do not deny it.’

‘I found in you the germ—only the germ—of that power which you have developed, by my assistance, into the highest kind of magnetic influence. I made you what you are.’

‘What I was, what I am no longer.’

‘You do not deny, then, that you owe everything to me?’

‘In all the arts which you profess and I have practised, I acknowledge my debt to you.’

‘Do you suppose that I have taken all this trouble for nothing? Do you think that

out of pure love I have given you my time and imparted to you my knowledge?’

‘I never did suppose that.’

‘On the contrary, I looked to making my profit in the future. I thought that common gratitude would attach you to me, and that when, as has now happened, I should be laid on the shelf, you would carry on the business still, the business which I made, and which I taught you, as my partner instead of my assistant.’

‘Your assistant? I have been your partner——’

‘I thought that the time would come when I should say: “Paul, here are deeds of partnership. Let us sign them and henceforth share.”’

Paul jumped and turned pale.

‘Henceforth share? What do you mean? Why, we have shared all these years, we have been partners!’

‘Partners? Oh! no. Certainly not. Partners? Indeed, my gifted young friend, you are carried away by your imagination. Never

partners. You entered the house as my pupil. You remained as my assistant. You were my hired help. It remains with you to determine whether you will, in good time, become my partner.'

'Oh! This is monstrous. Why, I have done the lion's share of the work for six years and more. You have spoken of the business a thousand times as one joint concern.'

'So I have. So I have. The joint concern of master and servant—as we say in England.'

'I was your partner,' Paul cried angrily. 'As your partner, I demand my share of the money. I never had any money. You kept it all for me. Where are the books? Give me my money, I say, and let me go.'

'Reach me my desk. Thank you, Paul, thank you.' The old man sat up in his chair and opened the desk. 'Now, here, my paid and hired assistant, is a paper in which I have jotted down, as near as I could make it out, a statement of our position as regards each other.'

PAUL, otherwise Paulus, otherwise Paolo,

In account with

Professor Melchers, Spiritualist.

<i>Creditor.</i>	<i>Debtor.</i>
Six years' salary as Assistant Spiritualist at \$1,000 . . . } \$6,000	Board and lodging in the best style, at \$1,500 a year, seven years . . . } \$10,500
	Tuition Fees for seven years at \$1,000 a year } \$7,000
	Dress, chiefly in black velvet and lace, in the best style, at \$1,000 a year . . . } \$7,000
	Moneys advanced for seven years, &c. exact account in cash book } \$2,100
Balance due to Prof. Melchers } \$23,600	European tour for eight months, say } \$3,000
Total . . . \$29,600	Total . . . \$29,600

‘Here is the account, Paul.’ He handed the document, which was very neatly written on a piece of note paper. ‘I think that no one can find fault with any of the items unless, perhaps, the charge for maintenance. But that is balanced by the enormous salary which you have received—and consider the luxury in which you lived. The tuition fee is moderate indeed.’

‘Oh,’ cried Paul, ‘this is monstrous!’

‘Not at all, not at all. Quite regular and moderate. Should you accept the partnership which I now offer you, the little debt would soon be wiped off. I might even make a reduction.’

‘I deny everything—everything,’ cried Paul. ‘You have called me your partner a thousand times. You have always spoken of our business. As for tuition, what had you to teach me after the first few months?’ He tore up the paper and threw the fragments on the table. ‘Give me my money,’ he said hoarsely. ‘Give me my own and let me go.’

‘If,’ said the old man blandly, ‘if I said words of encouragement it was in order to make you zealous, and I will say that you became very zealous. There is not a trick of the trade, not a knot in the great web of deception which we weave, but is familiar to you. I took pride in my assistant. My old friends congratulated me upon you, Paul. You had your little weaknesses, such as inordinate vanity and a foolish desire to become a great

man, which you could never be, and a constant craving for flattery. But I did take pride in you, and for the three years that you worked for me I did very well, very well indeed. The dollars rolled in. That is not to be denied. I had need of them in order to pay myself back something of that awful load of debt.'

'Oh! Debt! Debt! I will not hear of it. Come, are you going to give me my share?'

'I am not, Paul. Once for all, I am not. If you persist in giving up a glorious business, and sacrificing my future as well as your own, not one solitary dollar do you get. That is my last word, Paul. Think it over. Think what it means.'

Paul sank into a chair. He had not looked for this. The old professor was his banker. If he wanted any money he asked him for it. He had always considered himself a partner, and he knew that the income of the firm was very large during the three years when he worked for it. And now—to be told that he was only an assistant. To be shown a sheet

of paper by which it was made to appear that he owed his instructor three-and-twenty thousand dollars!

‘It is my last word, Paul,’ the old man repeated, looking at him steadily with his keen eyes under his white eyebrows. ‘I shall proceed to consult a lawyer on the recovery of this debt.’

Paul made no reply.

‘Consider, my dear boy,’ his partner went on. ‘You have lost your power because you have neglected my warning, and suffered your mind to become wholly occupied with a woman. Well—I have no objection to your marrying. I will even see that you start handsomely. When you have been married a month your mind will begin to recover its balance again, and your old power will gradually come back. Then we will all three go back to New York. I will have a deed of partnership properly drawn up: you shall conduct the active part of the business. I will sit by and advise. You will keep your wife in style and luxury: you will be always

learning more and more, and you will be always becoming a greater power in the land. Listen now. Come down from your stilts and be reasonable. I have matured a scheme for getting at the private affairs of every man of standing in the City of New York: it is a scheme absolutely safe, which shall never by any accident be connected with you and me. And you shall work the scheme. Come, Paul, I offer you the most enviable, the most delightful, the most honoured way of living possible, and you think of throwing it over for a mere scruple.'

Paul made no reply

'I confess, Paul, that I am loth to let you go, if by any persuasion or offers I can make you stay. I like you, boy. I have always liked you. And I admire you. I could never find, anywhere, another boy who would quite so well answer all my requirements. Indeed, I am too old now to look for another. You will be a very great, an irreparable loss, to me.'

Still Paul made no reply.

‘As for the money I have saved,’ the old man kept his eyes on Paul, watching the effect of his words, ‘that will be no more than enough for my own simple wants. If I wished to be generous and to give you money, I could not afford it.’

Paul’s face refused to show the least sign of being tempted.

‘And all for a wretched little scruple! Paul, it makes me sorry for you. I have told you over and over again that in our profession we do no more harm than in other professions. They want our advice; we sell it. They want counsel on all kinds of subjects; we profess to give it. Very well. Sometimes it is good advice; sometimes it is bad. We do our best. Meantime we learn, and watch, and keep eyes and ears wide open. A laborious profession, Paul, but not without honour.’

Then Paul arose and spoke with dignity and sadness.

‘Yes. It is hard upon you, after all your expectations. I will not work with you or

for you any longer. I am sick and ashamed of the whole business. Whatever happens to me I will no longer be a cheat and a rogue by profession.'

'Words, Paul, words, empty words.'

'People did not come to consult us ; they came to consult the spirits with whom we professed to communicate. I will have no more to do with it.'

'Then, Paul, let us waste no more words. Go from me—as you came to me—a pauper.'

CHAPTER VIII.

ONE MORE ENGAGEMENT.

‘I SENT for you, Paul,’ said Lady Augusta coldly, ‘because I wished to have a little conversation with you.’

‘I am always at your command, Lady Augusta.’ He was returning from Beaumont Street and thought to go straight to his own room, there to consider this unexpected blow. He was so ignorant of business that this parade of an account, with its preposterous list of charges, deceived and appalled him. He had been so careless that he never asked his partner—of course, they had been partners—for any statement, but he blindly believed himself entitled to a vast sum—a thousand dollars seems a vast sum to a young man who has never had any money to spend, and does

‘not’ understand the meaning of arithmetic. And now he was in debt, and in England, where they have, he knew, the Fleet Prison and the Marshalsea and the Queen’s Bench Prison, and correction houses for debtors. How was he to pay that debt? and what would happen to him when he had no money? The young man would fain have sat down to consider these things in his own room, but on his way he was met by Lady Augusta’s message.

‘Thank you, Paul.’

She hesitated and appeared to have some difficulty in formulating her questions. Then, moved by some recollection or thought, she put on the gracious smile of a *grande dame de par le monde*.

‘You have been very different from the ordinary medium, my dear Paul. You did not come here for money; you came a gentleman upon a visit, you have made us all love you—especially Hetty. Let me talk to you, as a woman old enough to be your mother, and very much interested in you.’

‘You have always been too kind to me,

Lady Augusta. I have not deserved your kindness.'

'First, my dear boy, is it quite true that you have lost your powers?'

'It is quite true.'

'Consider. Men, I know, sometimes pretend things for ambitious purposes. Tell me frankly, are you hiding something? Take me into your confidence, Paul.'

'I assure you, Lady Augusta, upon my hon——' he checked himself, remembering that he had never owned any of that precious possession, all of which had yet to be won. 'I assure you that I have entirely lost such powers as I ever had.'

'And shall you never recover them?'

'I have resolved to make no attempt to recover them. I have entirely closed that chapter of my life.'

'Really? But why, Paul?'

'I cannot tell you exactly why. But I have no other choice.'

'Oh! Paul, *must* it be?'

'It must.'

‘When we are only standing on the threshold of the Temple—when you have done little more than open the door for us to peep in? Frankly, Paul, I am disappointed.’

‘I am sorry.’

‘You came to us with credentials far beyond anything we had ever received before. My correspondent, Anna Petrovna, promised us achievements the like of which we had never before heard.’

‘I did some things for you. Were you disappointed in them?’

‘No, we were not. We were both surprised and delighted. But, Paul, the things you did were as nothing compared with the things you taught. I for one can never forget your teaching. You raised us, Paul. You lifted our souls—and yet you abandon us—you give up your work. Oh! It is as if an ancient prophet had resolved to listen no more to the word of the Lord, and had gone back to his plough and his vineyard. How can you abandon your calling, Paul?’

‘I have no choice,’ he repeated.

‘There was never any man,’ Lady Augusta went on, ‘who was able to move me so deeply as you could and did, Paul. No preacher, no teacher, no singer, no novelist, no poet, no actor. I longed daily for your voice, and now it is silent, or it utters only common things. Why is it, Paul—why is it?’

‘I cannot tell you.’

‘I looked for greater things, Paul. I looked for more teaching, more elevation of soul, a deeper communion with the other world.’

‘You would always look for greater things; you would always expect more.’ Paul recovered a little of his lost authority. ‘Those who first converse with spirits through a medium and witness manifestations are always asking for more. You, to whom a glimpse of the other world has been permitted, are impatient and dissatisfied, because you cannot have at once full sight and full communion. Have patience, Lady Augusta. Perhaps this will come in time—perhaps not.’

‘Yes. But acknowledge, Paul, that the message wants completeness.’

‘It may be so. Some allowance should be made for the imperfections of the messenger.’

‘There are always imperfections in the medium, to be sure—even in the best—in such as yourself. For instance, you promised that before you went away I myself should be endowed with your power of seeing and conversing with the spirits.’

‘Do you think that you would like that power? Think, Lady Augusta.’

‘You have it yourself. Do you like it?’

‘I have it no longer. Think, however, what it might mean. There are countless myriads of human souls—all immortal and imperishable—the souls of all the generations which have passed away: try to think of the air filled with them. They are the souls of the ancient barbarians and savages—wild men and women of the woods—the souls of pre-historic man, as well as man of these recent times. The common medium offers to call the spirit of Julius Cæsar or Homer. How can

he, amid all these myriads, call for one? Think of being always conscious of their vast multitude. You would see them wherever you opened your eyes: darkness would not hide them—walls would not protect you from seeing them. Unless you had, as well, the power of conversing with them, they would pass you in a never-ending silent procession. If you could speak to them, how many would you care to address? Think of the thousands of savage faces, brutal and ignorant still—of the bad faces, many more bad than good. They would come and glare upon you in the night. You would never sleep for thinking of their dreadful faces. There would be no kindness for you in their faces: there would be no sympathy for you. Could you endure this revelation?’

‘No, no; I could not. It would be too awful. But we shall die. Shall we join this dreadful procession of savage souls?’

‘I say not that. You will be enabled to find and join your own friends, to walk upon your own level.’

Lady Augusta shook her head. She had

never before realised how small a band her own friends constituted. To look for them in this vast crowd might be a hopeless task.

‘And consider—if my message has been delivered—that something survives. Mr. Brudenel says that he stands upon the Solid Rock. The fortunes which were in such shipwreck have been saved. And there are those conversations which we have had together. If what is true in them survives I shall be content to remember them with gratitude.’

‘But is your power really—hopelessly—gone?’

‘It is hopelessly gone.’

‘What a pity—what a pity?’

‘Perhaps.’

‘Well—it cannot be helped, then. I have enjoyed your visit very much, Paul. I am very, very sorry that it is all over. And—and—oh! my dear boy——’ The tears came to her eyes and she wrung her hands passionately—‘To think that it is all over when I hoped for so much. You do not know the dreadful disappointment I have had to endure

year after year, when one man came after another and all—all—were found out. If it were not that we *know*—as the outside world cannot know—the grand truth which underlies the pretences of these creatures, and that they actually have something of the power which we crave, I should have gone out of my senses long ago. And then you came and everything seemed opening up for us at last. You wanted no money. You came bringing wisdom and power with you. Oh! my heart leaped up. At last, I thought, we have the prophet we have longed for.'

'Oh! stop—stop,' Paul murmured.

'And then I discerned that what I had longed for and prayed for all my life had come to me at last; and the other world was to be no more an article of faith but a thing proved like a mathematical theorem. I thought that the immortality of the soul was going to be demonstrated so that every man in the world should know that this life is but an episode in which we may advance ourselves spiritually or degrade ourselves; make friendships and

alliances to last for ever. Oh! think of the change which would happen to the world. Did you ever try to think what would happen if we all knew for an actual fact that we are immortal and that we are always for ever going upwards or downwards? Then those who are on the upward slopes would encourage those lower down, and there would rise a universal longing for better things. Then vice and selfishness and all the sins of the world would vanish away, and we should understand the beauty of holiness. Think—oh! Paul! Think’—she clasped her hands and the tears rose to her eyes—‘think of the great hymn of praise which would go up from all alike if this were once proved and the living and the dead could commune each with the other.’

‘If that could be done!’ said Paul, meekly.

‘I thought that you would do it—you, Paul. And I thought that we would build a great college for spiritual research and that you should be its director, and that we should attract all the highest minds among the young

people to make them students, and then our advance would be so rapid. Oh ! I thought I saw world after world unfolding, planet speaking with planet, star to star. Paul—Paul’—her voice rose higher and higher—‘all these things were in your power. You would have done all this and more—and more—and you have basely abandoned everything, and are now no more than an ordinary young man, one of the world—blind, and deaf and dumb, though the spirits call aloud and order you to speak.’

‘They do not, Lady Augusta. I hear nothing. I see nothing.’

‘Oh ! it is dreadful—dreadful—to have this last hope, the best grounded of all, wrecked and ruined. Well, Paul, you could not help it, I suppose.’

He was silent. For a while neither spoke. Then Lady Augusta went on in a changed voice : ‘There were two other things I had to say. What were they ? Oh ! First, have you heard about our conference ?’

‘What conference ?’

‘I thought my husband had spoken to

you about the conference of spiritualists. It is the first réunion of spiritualists ever attempted to be held in this country. Mr. Brudenel has been asked to preside. They will come from all parts—from America, from Russia, from India——’

‘A conference of spiritualists? Will Mr. Chick and people like him be asked to speak?’

‘All will be invited to attend, from the most serious seeker to the commonest spirit rapper. We shall present to the world an imposing array as regards numbers and names; we shall encourage and stimulate ourselves by the communion of speech and the exchange of experience. You will speak, Paul?’

‘I do not know. I think you had better not ask me,’ he replied with lowered eyes.

‘I must ask you. Why, Paul, there has been no experience at all to compare with your own in the history of spiritualism. The sudden loss of your powers is in itself a most striking corroboration of their genuineness.

You must speak. We shall have papers of the common-place kind from men like Mr. Athelstan Kilburn and Mr. Amelius Horton. There will be, I am afraid, papers full of exaggerations, which we spiritualists always expect. There will be, I dare say, papers containing downright untruths and inventions. There always are.'

'What subject do you wish me to speak on?'

'You may, of course, take any that you please. In fact the word spiritualism covers an enormous field of research. But, Paul, the subject which I should like you to take up is the history of your own embassy.'

'The history of my own embassy. Yes, Lady Augusta,' he looked up with a strange light in his eyes, 'I will give the conference the history of my own embassy.'

'Very well, that is settled. And now, Paul, let us return to yourself. You have lost your powers, and you have at the same time fallen in love with Hetty. I questioned her about it, and she confessed the whole—

and you are going back to America. What are you going to do when you get there?’

‘I cannot say, yet.’

‘Have you any money?’

‘None at all. I have no profession, no private means, and no influential friends.’

‘But you cannot marry, Paul, unless you have an income.’

‘That is true. I ought not to have spoken to Hetty.’

‘You have rendered the greatest services to this house, Paul. You must not go away empty-handed. It must not be said that we suffered you to go away without solid proofs of gratitude.’

‘No, no,’ Paul made haste to reply, ‘it is impossible for me to take money of you or of any one else in your household. Lady Augusta, you said that I came a gentleman on a visit. Let me, if possible, go, as I came, a gentleman—yes, a gentleman—who ends his visit.’

CHAPTER IX.

YET ANOTHER BLOW.

It was the day of the dance, and an unwonted stir and restlessness, with the running about of the servants, and the voices—actually the voices—of strange men filled the house. The preparations of festivity, the gaiety and happiness of the girls, mocked the melancholy which filled Paul's breast. How can people be heartlessly happy in the presence of other people who go in sadness? Everything conspired to make him sad. He was only a young American, a medium, a mesmeriser who had somehow lost his magnetic power, and a pauper. The only thing that distinguished him was his great achievement in saving the family fortunes, and that feat was damaged by the discovery that, whoever

caused those letters to be written, he himself knew beforehand of the danger that threatened the company. The only consolation to his soul was the importance which the mysterious feat conferred upon him.

‘Come upstairs, old man,’ said Tom. ‘We’ll have tobacco and talk. I’ve got nothing to do this afternoon, and you never have anything to do.’

Paul followed him with a sinking heart, and the certainty—less sensitive men would have felt a little uneasiness only—but Paul knew for certain that something unpleasant was going to happen. Every day brought fresh disgraces and humiliations. There was going to be another.

Tom had no intention of making unpleasantness. He construed all the fine talk about the loss of power, and the recovery of memory as to the past, and the rest of it, as the machinery prepared beforehand to cover a graceful withdrawal, with perhaps a final little miracle to mark the departure of the magician. ‘Thank the Lord,’ he observed to

Sibyl, 'there will be no more Abyssinian philosophy. That's done with and decently buried. The fellow's ashamed of his rubbish. He has the grace to be ashamed, Dodo. Wherefore I like him the better. Strange that you and I should like a fellow who came here with a mass of lies, and has made fools of everybody in the house except you and me. He's ashamed, Dodo. He won't ever do it again.'

Tom had no desire to be unpleasant. Yet he became horribly unpleasant. For he knocked away the last prop which kept up Paul's self-respect, and plunged him into the lowest depths of abasement. But he only meant to straighten up things a bit before Paul left them, so that there should be no misunderstanding afterwards. It surprised him, afterwards, to think how unpleasant he had made himself.

'Well,' he said cheerfully, 'it's all over, isn't it? Prodigies came out unexpectedly strong. Miracles undoubted. Manifestations not to be explained on any other reasonable

hypothesis than the direct interferences of supernatural agency. I haven't had an opportunity of talking to you privately about the thing, but I hope you are satisfied.'

'Quite. My message delivered——'

'I thought you were forgetting that. Well. Let us put it so, to save explanation.'

'My message once delivered, of course everything was done.'

'And now, I take it,' Tom went on, 'we may consider that the whole business may be frankly discussed, just as if you had not been the principal actor in it.'

'Ye—yes. I suppose so. Why not?'

'Well, if you come to that, why not, indeed?' Tom sat down and lit his cigarette. He smoked it straight through without saying another word. Then he threw the stump away and took another.

'Paul, old man,' he said, 'I took to you from the first. You know I did. It wasn't so much your cleverness, because clever men are often beasts. And it wasn't because I saw at the first go off that you were a long way ahead

of Chick and his lot. Of course I admired your wonderful cheek, and some of the stories you told were first class. But I liked your manner, and I've always liked your manner ever since.'

'Thank you.'

'Yes. It was your manner. You cast yourself upon us. You made everybody your friend from the very beginning, except Sibyl. You've got a most surprising manner. It's irresistible. No wonder you mesmerised the girls and cured the housemaids' toothaches. It was your manner that caught on to me. It's admirable, Paul; admirable. Now that you remember where you hail from, you might perhaps remember how you got it. Was it from some Italian marchese, your grandfather?'

'No. We are plain New England people, who came over for conscience' sake two hundred years ago.'

'For conscience' sake, just as you came back to the old country? The Puritan blood still showing itself.'

Paul blushed.

‘Your manner is most certainly inherited. I expect you come in reality from some great English house. What was your name before you were christened Herr Paulus?’

‘My name is Trinder.’

‘Trinder—Lord Trinder—Earl Trinder—Sir Paul Trinder, Baronet. Tough old Sir Tom Trinder who fought at Agincourt. No, I can’t remember any Trinder in history. But it’s the fault of the historians. There must have been some Trinder, brave and handsome, clever and courteous. He was the comrade in arms of Bayard, his grandson was the friend of Philip Sydney, his great-grandson the sworn brother of Crichton.’

‘I know nothing about my English ancestors,’ said Paul gravely.

‘Well, old man, before you go away let us have a little explanation. You’ve given up the business entirely, I hear. I am not sorry, because, though the miracles are exciting at the time, the machinery must give a great deal of trouble and the—the—acting, you

know, has got to be kept up all the time carefully.'

'I have lost my power and I shall never get it back again. That is what you mean, isn't it?'

'That's near enough. Well, old man. I told you the very first night you came that I should watch you all the time. I told you that, didn't I?'

'You certainly did. I hope you have been watching me.'

'That's just it—I have—and I've arrived at some rather curious and interesting results. First of all, before I tell you what they are, tell me what you propose to do. That is, if it is not an impertinent question.'

'I have not decided.'

'Look here,' Tom laid his hand on Paul's, 'let us make no mistakes about things. You saved all that money. Nothing could have made my dear old hump of a guardian believe that the company—his company—could be in a bad way. You saved all that. Very good. Then we are grateful. And you made him

write that letter to me. Nobody else could have done it, because he'd got an idea in his blessed chump that the cause wants a vestal, and that it was his duty to provide the vestal, and so he had determined to carry it through like another Jephthah. Nobody but you, I say, could have made him write that letter. As for the three cheques and the letter of introduction, and all—they were just part of the machinery. You can't throw off a miracle to advantage without the preliminary patter, and the scenery, and properties. Therefore, don't think I am crowing over any little discovery that I have made. Well, then, the long and short of it is, Paul, that we are deeply indebted to you—so deeply that nothing can ever pay that debt of gratitude.'

'It is paid already. There is no need for gratitude.'

'We are so deeply indebted to you that I ventured to talk to you about your present affairs. You will not, I know, stay here much longer. Indeed, since you have ceased to—to manifest—you know—Lady Augusta, who

is nothing if not a spiritualist, has ceased to desire your stay to be prolonged. I dare say she will tell you so herself very soon. So you will go away—I have no right to ask where you are going. But you have given me the right to ask whether we can in any way make your path easier for you—whether we can find some of the funds necessary for comfort—whether, in fact, you are rich.’

‘Yesterday morning,’ said Paul, ‘I should have replied that I was possessed of ample funds. This afternoon I can tell you that I have but a single sovereign in the world besides a lot of useless and expensive things which I can sell, or pawn, in order to get back to the States.’

‘And then?’

‘I do not know. I must get back. I must get away from this. And I must take Hetty away too.’

‘My dear Paul, you must take something from me. You have saved everything that Sibyl, Cicely, and I possessed in the world. You *must* let us provide for you.’

‘No, Tom. If there were nothing but splitting rails for the rest of my life I would not take your money, nor the money of anybody in this house. I *could* not. Oh! You must understand why?’

‘I think I can, old man. I am sure, on the whole, that I can. Then let us lend you money. Borrow, if you will not accept.’

‘No, I would rather die than borrow your money.’ He sprang to his feet and rushed to the window. Tom thought he heard something like a choke. He therefore preserved silence.

‘I have noticed,’ he went on presently, ‘for some days that you’ve been looking unhappy. Is it the trouble about money?’

‘Perhaps. Never mind the money. Talk of something else. It drives me mad to talk about money.’

‘Well—if I must not—yet it is a very important subject of conversation at all times—let us talk of something else. Let us return to that watch I have been keeping up, you know. Would you like to know what I have learnt?’

Paul turned pale—to the very lips. ‘Yes,’ he faltered, ‘I should like to hear.’

‘First, when I came to think over the very wonderful manifestations—you know—of the first night which, I must say, were far away the best things of the kind I ever witnessed, I connected them, as our friend Emanuel Chick did, with mesmeric force, or magnetism. Then I began to read up the subject. I read many books which contained many lies. I even began to practise at the laboratory. And I succeeded in putting two or three of the students into a mesmeric trance and I made them do things. You see I was on the right track.’

Paul made no reply.

‘I then made another discovery. I found that legerdemain, added to mesmeric powers, would enable a man to do all kinds of things. The two things together explained how the girls were made to see and to say exactly what you pleased, and how the paper came fluttering from the ceiling, and why the photographs represented the girl’s thoughts.’

‘Go on.’

‘I also found it abundantly proved that a person may be cured of many disorders by being subjected to mesmeric influence, and that mesmerism is an anæsthetic which deserves to be considered scientifically; and that a man who has developed this power, which I suppose to be latent in everyone, may get another into his power completely and make him do all kinds of things of which he will afterwards remember nothing.’

‘All this is perfectly true.’

‘Then, Paul, come with me, and I will show you something more.’

He led the way up a stair to the roof. On the roof stood a little kind of tent.

‘Come in here.’

Paul followed him. The canvas fell over the entrance and they were in darkness.

‘This,’ said Tom, ‘is not a photographer’s tent, though it looks like it. The tent is in fact a camera obscura, and it is so arranged as to command a view of a place with which you are familiar. See.’

The little table which stood within the tent became suddenly lit up with a picture in colours. It was a picture representing Mr. Cyrus Brudenel in his study. That gentleman sat in his wooden chair before his table, papers and letters were lying before him, but he sat tapping his knuckles with his double glasses.

‘Do you recognise that look in his face?’ Tom whispered. ‘I have seen it a dozen times. It means doubt and discouragement. It is the old story. One after the other they have come here, bearing in their hands the keys which set open the gates of the other world. Mr. Brudenel has been permitted to look through the gates. He never sees anything, but he is always going to have a full view next day. He pays large sums of money for the privilege. Sometimes the spirits on the other side converse with him: they have even appeared to him; he has seen them: he has been permitted to grasp their hands, to feel their breath upon his cheek, and to be kissed by them. But they have never told him one

single thing which conveyed the least instruction. Just as he has seen nothing, so he has learnt nothing. All his life has been spent in accumulating testimonies to the existence of the other world, and the possibility of communicating with its inhabitants. It seems to me a waste of a good life. Does it not?'

Paul made no reply.

'Each claimant as he came brought him at first complete assurance and firm conviction. In fact, he never doubted for one moment the truth of spiritualism. But every successive operator has left behind him a doubt, to say the least, as to his truth and honesty. Something unpleasant has come out before they went away or after. As for poor old Chick, he has been discredited a hundred times. Yet he still turns up again with a new message which means nothing. He, however, is quite used to be treated as a humbug. Look—he is very uneasy.' Mr. Brudenel at this point rose from his chair and began walking about the room. 'He is thinking of what that old boy said about your power of putting

two and two together. His mind is filled with the suspicion that it was you who found out the state of the company, and not His Excellency the Right Reverend the Lord Bishop Izák Ibn Menelek, the Falasha, who interfered. The suspicion keeps him stretched upon the rack. It is turning the Solid Rock into a quagmire. Paul, my dear boy, it was awfully clever, but it won't hold water, after Mr. James Berry's innocent observation this morning. Paul, if I were you I would pack up and go very soon. He will recover a little when you are gone.'

Paul uttered some inarticulate kind of groan.

'I have occupied myself,' Tom went on, 'in a very interesting series of observations, the nature of which you can guess. I have seen our dear old friend there morning after morning reduced to insensibility. I have then seen you, Paul, take his keys out of his pocket, unlock and ransack his safe, open and read his letters, and examine his papers. I have seen you—not heard you—put questions to him

and receive answers from him. I have seen you order him to write letters which you have dictated. By the help of a magnifying glass I was enabled to read those letters. In this way I acquired information which was very useful to me. In fact, Paul, I knew all along what you were doing, though I confess there were some things which I did not quite understand; for instance, the appearance of the day's paper. That of the month old paper was a very feeble performance. Anybody could do that with the help of the mesmeric power. But——'

Paul groaned heavily and fell across the table, over the image of Mr. Cyrus Brudenel who was just then sitting down again. He had fainted.

'Why,' said Tom, when he had got him downstairs and made him sit down on a sofa, 'who on earth would have thought that you were going to take it like this?'

'Oh! you knew—all along——'

'Yes—I knew.'

'And Sibyl knew.'

‘Yes—certainly. Sibyl knew. But no one else.’

‘And every time I spoke you were laughing at me.’

‘Not exactly laughing at you. We were wondering, perhaps, what was coming next.’

‘I will pack up and go at once,’ Paul cried springing to his feet.

‘Not yet, Paul. Sit down again. After a fainting fit you must rest a little. Tell me, Paul, you did not think that we took you seriously—you never insulted my intellect so far as that—did you?’

‘The others did, and I hoped—I thought—that after those letters you would. Oh! I am only a detected impostor. Let me go.’

‘Not just yet.’ Tom gently forced him to lie down. ‘Such a fainting fit as that shows that you were knocked over by more than my little story. Rest awhile.’

‘I am a detected impostor,’ said Paul. ‘I can never look anyone in the face again.’

‘Tut—tut—nonsense, man. I know all

about it, now. I know about the old man in Beaumont Street. I know all about Bethiah. I know all about Hetty. And I've known all along—who could help knowing?—that you were playing your own game. There are people who believe in the clumsy jimmy about the Mahatmas and the Occult Philosophers and Karma and all that stuff—and so you were quite justified in thinking that there would be people ready to believe in your own little fake about the Falasha and Prince Menelek. Only I never thought that you reckoned me among the possible believers. That's all. You came to England in order to distinguish yourself. You thought you would perform your miracles and set the world ringing with your name. Well,' he continued, 'the miracles came off. No doubt about the miracles at all. Well, where's the honour? Where is the ringing voice of fame? The miracles have fallen flat. The papers never took them up. Just now the papers will not take up Spiritualism, except to relate how another medium has been detected. The

thing is in bad odour, you see. One or two people have asked me about the Indian paper-trick, but no one really believed it. Flatness, Paul, dead flatness—a frost—has fallen upon the miracles. Devil a bit of distinction after all your trouble. The old man in Beaumont Street is the New York medium who taught you——’

Paul groaned and buried his face in the sofa cushions.

‘I know everything—you see.’

‘Does—does anybody else know?’

‘I told you Sibyl knows. She has known all along.’

‘Oh!’ Paul groaned again.

‘Hetty does not know. It is left for you to tell her—what you please. If I were you I would tell her all.’

‘I cannot.’

‘As for me, there is one thing more that I have to learn.’

‘I will tell you nothing more. Oh! have you not tortured me enough?’

‘Sit up, Paul. So—’ Paul obeyed. ‘Look

me in the face. So. Keep your eyes fixed on mine—so—so——’

A strange giddiness fell upon Paul. Then he stiffened in all his limbs and sat upright. He who had mesmerised so many others was now himself mesmerised.

‘You have told me everything, Paul. I am much obliged to you. You have been in a mesmeric trance, and you have told me how you did the Indian paper miracle and the musical bells and everything. You are a prestidigitateur, a ventriloquist, and a mesmerist all in one. Thank you very much.’

Paul rose pale and confused.

‘Is it true?’ he asked.

‘It is quite true. But have no fear. I will not do it again. And now, old man, it’s all over; your cleverness will go off into some other line, won’t it? The last is a very striking and attractive line, but it is liable to misconstruction if people take it seriously. Better have done with it. The magician will soon be forgotten, and Hetty will make you happy.’

She has every virtue except one—she cannot be persuaded to honour her parents. She is full of prejudices about truth and tricks. All the more reason why she should be able to honour her husband, isn't it?'

Tom said no more. He felt ashamed—so to speak—of the shame he had brought upon the other man. He held out his hand.

'I cannot take your hand,' said Paul.

'You can—you shall, Paul. Take it at once. Else, by the Lord, I'll *mesmerise you again*, and make you sit down and write a letter and give up Hetty.'

CHAPTER X.

THE DANCE, AND AFTER.

SOME of the young people who were present at Lady Augusta's dance found it, I believe, a most delightful evening. They danced, they talked and laughed, they danced again. They had supper, again they danced, and they went home early in the morning or very late at night, just as you choose to put it, and just as they always do on these occasions. The elderly people who came with the girls took perhaps a less keen delight in the entertainment. Towards daybreak they grew silent: their smiles were set, their eyelids were heavy. And they all with one consent began to fidget in their seats. Everybody knows that stage of the evening when the elderly people begin to fidget. The sensation

commences in the backbone and works upwards to the head and to the arms and fingers and downwards to the knees and feet, until the whole frame is fidgeting. That means that the poor old frame should have been lying sound asleep between the sheets long ago. In a more civilised state of society, middle-aged and elderly people will be 'fetched,' like children, at an early hour. The comfort of the thing will remove the apparent ignominy.

Did you ever ask a man who has gone to a theatre with toothache how he enjoyed the play? Or another who was deaf how he liked the concert? Or a man with gout if the sermon did him any good? Or a man going to be hanged how he enjoyed the scenery on the way? The accounts given by these gentlemen of the entertainment provided for them would probably vary considerably from those given by others free from bodily and mental pain. Sibyl, for instance, found the evening much—very much—too short; to Paul, on the other hand, it was insufferably long.

He was horribly miserable ; he was at the lowest depth of shame ; he felt mean beyond any power of expression. He had endured being called a Medium's Cad, but with difficulty. He had endured the suspicion—call it the proof—that he knew, beforehand, about the tottering Company ; he had learned that he had no money at all. Yet there was one consolation—the fortunes of the family had been saved, and that by his mysterious Friends. No way out of that mystery was possible. On that achievement he would rest his claims to be remembered when he was gone. That one thing enabled him to retire with dignity, as one who abdicates. And now, good Heavens ! he had been all the time in the company of a man who had found him out—more, had watched him and seen him at work every morning—opening letters, searching safes, making his patient write to dictation. Yet that man, with that knowledge, had treated him with a friendliness which in his abasement seemed contemptuous toleration. Paul—Paul—who had scorned the

clumsy Medium who is caught stalking about the room wrapped in a newspaper, who derided the poor wretch convicted of producing the spirit message on the ceiling with a pair of lazy tongs—how was he a whit better than any of the petty cheats and liars who haunt the outer fringe of spiritualism?

This was an extremely unpleasant mood to bring to the dance. Not many of the young men who were preparing for that festival were quite so gloomy, though debts and duns, disappointments and defeats, and unsatisfied desires do surround the path of early manhood, and too often spoil and corrupt what should be the most delightful time of life.

Paul thought that it would be best for him to creep into the room when it was quite full, and when all the guests had arrived. Then he would be least noticed, and would go and stand in a corner all the evening out of the way. To stand in a corner all night while other people dance and look happy—it does not, at first sight, seem as if it would be a

pleasing mode of passing the nocturnal hours. Yet many deliberately choose thus to spend their nights.

Unfortunately he was little versed in the ways of dancing, and concluded that by appearing a quarter of an hour after the time named he would find the rooms full.

No one was in the rooms except Sibyl herself.

‘Paul,’ she said, ‘you are looking horribly ill. You have been ill and miserable for several days. What does it mean? Nothing new has happened?’

‘No; nothing new. It is only that I have been told a great many things that are old. Oh! Sibyl, how can you speak to me? Why do you not order me out of the house? Tom has told me everything. I am a wretch, and you have known it all along. And now Hetty must know it too.’

‘Hetty will know nothing, Paul, except what you please to tell her. All that is past and gone. Cheer up, Paul, and look happy

for Hetty's sake. Come, you used to be so good an actor.'

'I cannot act any longer. I can do nothing now. Sibyl, I ought not to be here—I have no business to be among these people.'

'All that is over, Paul. Cheer up, for Hetty's sake. Do your best to smile. See, here she comes, beautiful and happy.

It was Hetty, dressed in white. Cicely gave her the dress. Paul's face cleared up a little at the sight of her. She came prepared for a happy evening. What girl, who knows she is looking her best and has her lover waiting for her and is going to dance, but would feel happy?

And when the people began to arrive, which they did in a full stream and all with one consent at the same time, and the dancing began, Hetty and Paul stood aside and talked. She gave him as many dances as he chose to take, and agreed to sit out for them, because he had proved unable to manage the revolution of the right heel.

‘You are looking ill, Paul,’ she said.
‘Are you unhappy about something?’

‘No, Hetty. How can I be unhappy when I am with you? But there is nothing,’ he added, mendaciously. ‘We will go presently to Cicely’s room—no one will follow us there, and we shall be able to have a long talk. But you will want to dance.’

‘There will be plenty of time for both, Paul. You shall take me to Cicely’s room about supper time, if you like. Now don’t look at me like that, or people will notice it. Remember, Paul, please, that your eyes are a little—well—more expressive than most. When we are alone—yes, Paul—when we are alone—as much as you please. Now forget everything except that you are at a dance. What do you think of it? You have never been to a dance before, have you?’

‘No. Of course, I like the animation and gaiety of the scene, though some of the men look solemn over their steps. Perhaps, Hetty, they are thinking of the right heel. It seems as if there was no trouble or care or

necessity for work. Do you know what they would have said about dancing in my town ?'

'What?'

'They would have asked how waltzing can be consistent with your immortal welfare, and they would have groaned over the wickedness of laying your arm round a girl's waist.'

'Oh!'

'The best thing about society is the way in which everything like care and trouble must be left behind. Those who form society, Hetty, ought to be the most delightful people in the world.'

'Why? Because they must all be well bred?'

'No. Because the whole object of society is to make life happy, and in order to do that, everybody must do all he can to make everybody else happy. It is the very essence of society, I suppose, that everybody must be always trying to make everybody else happy. So that everybody must be always giving way.' Here an awkward couple collided

heavily with Paul. 'You see, Hetty,' he explained, 'I had to give way. Outside society everybody grabs all he can for himself. We will belong to the very highest society, Hetty.'

'We will, Paul—even if our circle only consists of two.'

'I suppose that most of the young men here have got their own private troubles, but they don't show them—any more than I do. We are all actors, Hetty, and we make each other happy by pretending to be happy ourselves.'

'To me, Paul,' Hetty whispered, 'it has always seemed as if the worst trouble, next to being ashamed of—things which you could not help—was the trouble of money. That was because we were so horribly poor.'

'Many of the young men here, I dare say, are sometimes troubled about money. But they hide the trouble. Yes—money—yes—money must be had somehow. Without money there is nothing—not even elementary society. I never thought much about money

until—well, I will tell you about it another time. You have never looked so beautiful as to-night, Hetty.'

'Oh! Paul.'

'It makes me happy again only to look at you. Hetty, I shall have to look at you a great deal, because there is more to forget than I thought there would be.'

Then they heard voices close to them. A young fellow and a girl, resting for a moment, are talking as they rest.

He was a young fellow of the truly British type—big-limbed and strong, capable of saying very downright things, and with no nerves to speak of. And the girl was a London girl—one of those who know everything, and go everywhere, and say what they please.

'This is the Home of Mystery and Magic,' said the girl. 'Here the spirits do congregate.'

'Don't you think they must be driven away to-night?'

'Why?'

'By rage and envy, because they can't waltz with you.'

‘Waltzing with a spirit would be quite a novel sensation. I will ask the next Medium I come across if he can raise a spirit who can dance.’

‘Have you ever seen any of the spirits?’

‘Oh! I’ve been to lots of séances, and we have had most wonderful messages. I’ve seen pale lights and shadowy-sheeted figures.’

‘Where do they buy their sheets?’

‘At Whiteley’s, I suppose.’ Well, you know, it’s delightful while it lasts, but one is always trembling lest something dreadful should be said or done. Because the Mediums do not pretend to have the spirits under control. And you go away in a kind of glow, and it is not until the next morning that you begin to understand that the messages amount to nothing, and that the raps and things might have been imitated, and that the whole thing was probably all a sham.’

‘Probably, I should say.’

‘After the lights were turned up Mr. Brudenel always made a little speech. He used to say that after this night there could

no longer be any doubt in the minds of the most incredulous. That sent us away happy. As for the Mediums, I've seen them of all kinds—young and old, American and English—and they are always truly dreadful persons!’

‘Well,’ said this delightful young man, ‘a fellow would have to climb down pretty low before he took up with that trade.’

‘Come away, Paul,’ Hetty whispered.

‘No. I will hear it all,’ he replied, with flaming cheek.

‘The last one who came here,’ the girl went on, ‘I did not see. I believe he is gone now. But I heard about him from Mrs. Tracy Hanley, who saw him do some wonderful things. She said he made up very well like an Italian Count, and told stories about Abyssinia, and pretended not to know where he was born. And he showed them one day an Indian daily paper of that same morning.’

‘It’s wonderful to think how people will believe everything,’ said the young man.

‘In this house they do, anyhow. If you were to come here and pretend anything you

please they would believe you, if only you said the spirits did it for you.'

'Let us try and see what will happen. You make up something and I will swear I saw you do it. I suppose when a man is not good enough to make a conjuror they turn him into a Medium.'

'I daresay. How can people be so foolish?' This young lady had spent the afternoon with an amateur professor of palmistry, who had sketched out for her the whole of her life, with the assurance of marriage and the tale of her years and the number of her babies, all written down prophetically. 'How can they be so foolish?'

'Are you rested?' said the young man.

'Paul! don't show your feelings so much in your face.' He was looking as if a Malay muck running would do him good, or a leap off Waterloo Bridge. 'What does it matter? It is as bad for me as it is for you—and worse; because I feel for both, Paul. Now you understand what I have suffered all my life. That is over and done with. You will

take me away from it. And, oh ! Paul—it is a bond between us.’

He sighed heavily.

‘I declare, Hetty,’ he said, ‘that until the other day I had quite forgotten that such things were said and thought about spiritualists, and—such men as myself. I thought that I would win favour and honour, and draw all hearts to myself. Oh ! what a fool—what a fool !’

‘Will one heart satisfy you instead of all ? Hush ! Here is my partner. Oh ! Paul, why could you not learn to dance ?’

Left alone, Paul began to spend a very enjoyable evening. He could not dance, and he knew nobody. He did not want to be introduced to anybody, being miserably conscious that he was only the last Medium imported and the latest Medium found out.

And it seemed, as the night slowly passed, as if everybody in this room was talking about nothing but the spirits and the Medium and the humbug of the whole thing, with contempt only veiled when their hostess or Sibyl might

overhear. In fact, to avoid speaking of spiritualism in the Temple of that Cult was impossible. And it gave such an excellent opening for conversation ; the newest beginner understood how to make use of such an opening : it was better than the weather. And nobody seemed to regard him or to recognise him, or to understand that here was the very man about whom some whispered and some jested—spiritualism lends itself with fatal readiness to the most elementary jester. Not a youngster fresh from school who had not some contemptuous little joke about the Medium.

He felt presently as if he were invisible, and condemned to walk about in places where he should hear the truth about himself. The whole truth, you see. None of the quarter or half truths with which some of us try to put things in a better light. The whole truth. He was condemned to hear what was said and thought about himself by old and young, by the elderly ladies who came with the girls, by the girls themselves, ingenuous

and frank, and by the young men of his own age—from all alike he heard contempt—no pity, or sympathy, or attempt to excuse—contempt simple. A dreadful punishment for all of us, but most dreadful to such a young man as Paul. To all of us, no doubt, it would be a salutary punishment, though so severe that we should none of us ever dare to do any work again, especially literary work. Then the publishers would be ruined, and authors and publishers would sit side by side in the casual wards, their quarrels forgotten, and the general public would fall back upon the Old Masters. To Paul, this was the last of the many scourgings with which Fate had afflicted him within the last few days. It finished him, as you will see. He could bear no more.

I suppose his imagination was growing morbid, because presently this fancy passed away and was succeeded by another. He thought he was there in person, but that the others were ghosts—shadows—figures moving about to mock him and to let him understand

what the world said of him. Only he himself of all the crowd was real. It was his punishment, he thought, for all his pretences and disguises, that he should be isolated. The rest of the world was apart from himself—he stood alone. That feeling of isolation comes to many men at times of grievous depression. We came into the world alone, we go out of the world alone; we walk through life alone, save for the love of women and children. Those who have not that support are indeed alone.

Presently one of the ghosts stepped out of the crowd and spoke to him.

‘Herr Paulus,’ she said, ‘I am going to scold you.’ He knew her now—it was the lady who wanted him to go to her Sunday evenings. ‘You have never once come to see me, and after all your promises.’

‘I am very sorry,’ he began.

‘Will you come next Sunday?’

‘I may be called away. I will come with the greatest pleasure if I am in London.’

‘Then I shall rely upon you, and I will

have the brightest and most delightful and most appreciative circle to meet you. We shall not expect you to do anything, but if you should be in the mood it would be pleasant on a Sunday evening, when one is surrounded by friends—not mere acquaintances—but people whom one can love and trust, and when the atmosphere has been charged with a certain seriousness, you know, and all that, a communication from the other world would be particularly suitable.’

‘I will try,’ said Paul, ‘if I am still here.’

‘I was present when you produced those two papers. Do you know, Herr Paulus—*may* I call you Paul?—Thank you. Do you know, Paul, that I have always wondered why more has not been made of that miracle. I met the Professor the other day and asked him what he made of it. He replied that if you would do it again before a committee formed of half-a-dozen prestidigitateurs and half-a-dozen men of science, and would leave the paper, not take it away, he was quite

ready to give the matter serious consideration. Will you do this for him?’

‘I think not.’

‘And they say everywhere that Mr. Brudenel was made to sell out his shares in the Company without knowing it, so that he saved an immense sum of money. If that is true it must have been done by you, Paul.’

‘Yes,’ said Paul, smiling, ‘that is true, and it was done by me. I believe that Mr. Brudenel does not desire the transaction to be a secret.’

‘Oh! it is wonderful—wonderful. May I tell everybody you are coming, Paul? It will be so great an attraction. Photographs falling from the ceiling, or even the bells of Heaven, would be better than nothing.’

‘Yes,’ said Paul, with a frosted smile, ‘even to hear the bells of Heaven would be — Yes, Mrs. Tracy Hanley, I will come, if I am still here, on Sunday next.’

‘Come and talk to me again presently, Paul. There are some delightful people here.

But you have no eyes for more than one delightful person.'

She laughed in the light way of her kind, and sailed away, and Hetty joined Paul again.

'There are two dances remaining for you, Paul,' she said. 'Come, we will go to Cicely's room. I think nobody knows of it, and we shall be alone.'

No one was there. The lamp was lit; the door was shut; nobody knew anything about this room.

Paul sank into a chair.

'Hetty,' he said, 'you must give me up.'

'Why, Paul?'

'Because I must give you up. I cannot drag you down to my level.'

'Oh, Paul, you are thinking of what those wretched people said. I know now that you were with a Medium in New York. Bethiah told me all about your youth and your failure to make a name in literature.'

'A Medium's Cad, Hetty. That is how Sir Percival put it.'

‘Nonsense, Paul. You might as well call Tom a Professor’s Cad, because he is Demonstrator in the Physical Laboratory.’

‘No, to have been a Medium at all is infamy. It brands a man for life. He can never recover his self-respect. Hetty, bid me go and give you up.’

‘Paul! If you meant what you say—but you do not.’

‘I am disgraced for ever.’ He threw out his hands and began to walk up and down the room.

‘Hetty, go away—leave me. I am lost, I am utterly miserable. I have nothing in the world except you, and I have no right—no, not the smallest right—to love such a girl as you.’

She looked at him with wonder.

‘We two, Paul,’ she said, ‘have both had the same enemy. No one can hate the very name of Spiritualism more than I do. I have had to look on and know that the professional Medium is full of cheats and tricks and lies. And my mother is one! Oh, had it not

been that you showed us beyond a doubt that there is a way open to the other world, I could have run away and drowned myself for very shame. Now I know that it is not all trickery. But we will have nothing more to do with the other world. The present shall be enough for us. Why, Paul, you are young and quite clever—all the world is open to the man who is young and clever. And I can wait in patience if only I know that you are working like other men. Now you are apart from other men. But in the future—oh! Paul, in the future—when we are together and far away from this place, we shall look back upon the past like a bad dream. And of the other world we shall be satisfied to know that some men have found a way to speak with those beyond; but as for us, we will cling to the old paths, and go to church and have simple faith just like the rest of the world.'

'I *cannot* tell her,' said Paul. Then he lifted her hand and kissed it humbly.

Hetty laid her head upon his shoulder.

Then Paul laid his arm about her waist and kissed her lips.

‘Yes,’ he said. ‘The past is gone. I have but one thing more to tell you, Hetty. When I have told you that, and not until then, our new world will begin. But I cannot tell you that to-night. Kiss me. Oh! my love—if it is the last time. Kiss me. Kiss me, Hetty.’

The tears were in his eyes and in his breaking voice. Why? Hetty partly knew and partly guessed. But as yet she did not know the whole truth.

‘I shall not go back with you,’ he said. ‘I cannot go back and see them dancing. I shall go to my own room, and stay there locked-up like a convict. I am not fit to stand among them. Is there anywhere another story of how such a wretch as myself—such an object of contempt and derision—once dared to love a true woman? And was it ever told that the woman could ever love him in return?’

‘You must not think such things, Paul,

my dear,' said Hetty. 'I love a man who is strong and brave and clever. He has made mistakes, but they are past and forgotten. He will yet do great things in the world, and I shall be proud of him. Or if he does not do great things, he will do good things, and I shall still be proud of him.'

Hetty took both his hands in hers and laughed gently—the woman's laugh which drives away the evil spirits—it is always the woman of whom the Devil is afraid, because she is clear sighted and direct and cannot be humbugged. When she laughed and pressed his hand, Paul felt a little stronger, as a fainting man after a teaspoonful of brandy. His mistress knew already that the guidance of this man's life would be her own. He was so ignorant—but ignorance may be cured: so sensitive—a thing which can never be cured: so unaccustomed to men and the ways of the world—that he must lean on someone—and upon whom better than his wife? Some women despise the man who is not masterful—I think most women love to be 'directed,'

either by their husbands or their spiritual advisers. Some of whom—Hetty was one—love a man all the more for his weakness and his unfitness to fight the battle of life.

‘You shall not go back to the ball-room, Paul,’ she said. ‘You are ill to-night, you are not fit for the noise and excitement. Little things—like the talk of those two people—vex and worry you. Go to your own room and try to sleep. In the morning you will have forgotten these dreadful thoughts. If they trouble you any more, dear, remember that everybody in this house knows as much about you as I know myself. And they all love you just the same as if you had been the son of some Italian marchese and had been brought up in Florence or Venice—or even in Abyssinia itself, for that matter. Lady Augusta loves you as if you were her son, Sibyl loves you, Cicely loves you. It is no great credit then for me to go on loving you when you love me above all the others. Oh ! Paul, if you suffer, I suffer. If you reproach yourself, you reproach me. We have had the

same memory. Good-night, Paul, good-night, my dear.'

She kissed him and clung to him for a moment and then let him go.

Paul left her with bowed head and went straight to his own room. Then Hetty went back to the dancers.

But she left the door open, and other couples discovered this Temple of Incipient Love, and came here and were perfectly happy. Thus doth the same room witness many emotions. It may not be, you see, after all, monotonous to be a room.

Paul reached his own room. Struck with some indecision, he stood at the door, his hand upon the lock, and listened.

Below the music was playing a waltz. He seemed to hear the voices of the dancers as they went round or as they stopped to rest. 'Full of ghosts it is . . . Mediums all hum-bugs . . . Every kind of credulity here . . . Fellow said he came from Abyssinia . . . Are we finding them out . . . Came for what he could get, of course . . . Told that he's in

the room somewhere . . . Hope he won't hear what is said . . . Do him good if he does . . . Some cad pretending to be a gentleman . . . Ought to be kicked downstairs.' . . . He heard these words and voices quite plainly and distinctly above the fiddles and the harp and the cornet : though several stairs and walls interposed between himself and the speakers, he heard them quite clearly. It was his punishment to bear them. And then he heard the voice of Mrs. Tracy Hanley. 'Even to hear the bells of Heaven would be better than nothing.' His early teaching it was, I suppose, which caused him a dreadful pang. Even to hear those bells—if it were but afar off—how should he get within hearing of those bells?

Lastly he seemed to hear the voice of Hetty. 'Go to your own room, Paul.' It was a voice of authority, and Paul obeyed, and shut his door.

So while the young men and the maidens, who were really not thinking about Paul a bit, and had only used the subject for an

opening, were making merry, and some of the young men were trying to say clever things, and some were trying to look used up, and some were trying to look handsome, and some were trying to look distinguished, and some were trying to seem as if they were behind the scenes in everything, and all were trying to look twice as interesting and attractive to their partners as nature had made them—this young man, who had also tried to make himself a good deal more interesting and capable than nature intended, was creeping, miserable and guilty, between the sheets. The music went on and the champagne corks popped, and the young men laughed, and the girls smiled, and many seeds were sown that night, which are now growing into fine trees, covered with *pommes d'amour*. In the ball-room they were all so happy, and in the bedroom there was one so miserable.

‘Where is Paul, Hetty?’ asked Sibyl.

‘He has got a dreadful headache. I have told him to go to bed. He is making himself miserable about having been a Medium, Sibyl.

Say something kind to him, will you, to-morrow?’

‘Yes, I will. You must console him, Hetty dear.’

‘I will, if I can. But he thinks so much of what you say, Sibyl.’

‘He will be all right to-morrow, Hetty. Don’t be uneasy about him.’

It was about half-past five in the morning when Paul woke up. He woke with a start, expecting to hear the music below and the voices of the dancers. There was no music—the house was quite silent. He sprang from the bed, and pulled the curtains aside. The sun had been up already an hour and more. He threw open the window. The cold air and the sunshine dispelled the ghosts of the night. He was able to think. First, he thought he must leave the house at once. After all that had happened he could not possibly remain another day. He must leave the house before breakfast—before they came downstairs.

He considered, next, the subject of money.

He had a pound or two in his purse ; he had a box full of rings, studs, chains, and pins—he would sell or pawn all these. He had a splendid dressing case, with everything of silver ; he had a quantity of gorgeous apparel, some of which he would also sell. He could, in fact, raise enough in this way to get back to America. Hetty would have to wait.

He dressed and packed his things. Then he opened the door, and went softly downstairs, carrying his portmanteau upon his shoulder, and his dressing case in his hand. The house was quite silent, with the feeling that belongs to a house where everybody is asleep. Arrived in the hall, Paul set down his portmanteau and went into the study.

He sat down at the table, and took pen and paper. How familiar it seemed to him—this study with the long rows of invaluable books of magic and mystery ; this great solid table, the safe in the corner, the busts of departed humbugs. Now he would never

see it any more. He was going out of the house where he had been so tenderly and kindly entertained.

‘Dear Lady Augusta,’ he wrote. ‘After our conversation of yesterday you will not be surprised at receiving this note. I am going away in the early morning—before any of you are downstairs. I do this to avoid further explanations and farewells. But I cannot possibly go away without expressing my most sincere and heartfelt thanks for the kindness you have extended to me since I became your guest. I never knew before what the gracious hospitality of an English lady meant. Now I understand, and I shall remember all the rest of my life. I may be allowed, I hope, to write these few words of thanks, though I have to add the expression of my sincere remorse for the manner in which I have repaid your kindness. I intended to tell you in full what I mean by this. But I find I cannot—now. And yesterday I could not. Lady Augusta, your kindness was misplaced, but I do not think that it will ever

be forgotten by your most humble servant, Paul.'

He folded this letter, placed it in an envelope, and left it on the table, addressed to Lady Augusta.

Then he went back to the Hall, put on his splendid fur coat—it was an easterly wind, the breeze of soft delicious May—took his umbrella and hat, and shouldered his portmanteau. And then he left the house.

There are not many cabs about at six o'clock in the mornings of May. Paul walked as far as the Marylebone Road, staggering under the weight of his portmanteau and his dressing case and his fur-lined coat. The poetry of the flight was completely destroyed.

'Where to, sir?' asked the cabman who at last came along the road.

'I don't know,' said Paul.

'Don't know, sir?'

'No,' said Paul, irritably. 'How the devil should I know?'

'Well, sir, if you don't know, who should? Want an hotel, sir?'

‘Yes, to be sure, of course I do. You are an intelligent man. I must have a hotel. Drive me to a hotel. Drive me to the Langham. I’ll double your fare. Of course,’ said Paul, ‘I wanted a hotel all along.’

CHAPTER XI.

A COUNCIL.

THE day after the Dance there was a Committee of Three in Bethiah's Studio. It consisted of Bethiah herself, Tom, and Sibyl.

The business before that Committee was the actual condition and the future prospects of Paul, or Herr Paulus, by baptism Ziphion, and by patronymic Trinder.

'He went away,' said Tom, 'before anybody was out of bed this morning. It is alleged by a housemaid that she was up at six, and that his bedroom door was then open. But this evidence is not considered trustworthy.'

'I hope and trust that he has not resolved to vanish,' said Bethiah. 'I know that he did think of vanishing when his last miracle was accomplished.'

‘I should not think so,’ said Tom. ‘He packed up and took away all his things. The illustrious pretender who jumped into Etna took away nothing but his brazen slippers, which the volcano refused to keep, as useless. What does a volcano want with slippers? Paul took away a beautiful new portmanteau, large, and stuffed with things; and a lovely dressing case crammed with silver things; and sealskin coats and fur-lined coats, and gold-headed umbrellas. Oh! he hasn’t vanished.’

‘Did he leave any letter?’

‘Yes. He left a note for Lady Augusta, thanking her briefly for her great kindness to him during his stay.’

‘And what does Lady Augusta say?’

‘She has come to the conclusion that his friends in Abyssinia have called him away, and that he is now sitting in a white linen robe, exchanging maxims with the Sage Izák Ibn Menelek. Mr. Brudenel is of the same opinion, and Lady Augusta talks of getting together the fragments of philosophic teach-

ing which the young Prophet has left behind——’

‘Oh! Paul must see her,’ cried Bethiah in distress. ‘He must tell her the truth. He *must*. Mr. Langston,’ Bethiah turned to Tom with pleading eyes, ‘please try not to despise my poor boy too much. He was always imaginative and sensitive. I never saw anywhere a boy of quicker perceptions. He was like a girl for jumping straight at a conclusion. He was like a girl in many other ways. He hated rough work and rough talk. He was perfectly unfit to struggle with other men. As for money, there was not another American in the world who cared less about it and was less qualified to make money.

‘Well—but—still—’ said Tom.

‘Wait a little, Mr. Langston. He left his native town—oh! why did we let him go?—at seventeen. He went to New York resolved to become a poet—all at once. He failed, of course. He spent his money and then fell into the hands of a man who called him his pupil, humoured and en-

couraged him, and kept him ignorant of the world. Never was any boy so ignorant of the world as Paul. He knew nothing. This man, who must be a most dangerous, unscrupulous person, persuaded him that his power of magnetic influence could be made a lever by which he could conquer the world. Then he gradually encouraged him to set off the plain and simple mesmerism with all kinds of artifices and pretences. It was setting his own cleverness against the cleverness of the world, it was doing what all other men did, to pretend all kinds of knowledge in order to make use of the one kind they knew. For seven years this man used Paul ; he kept him all the time apart from society, from papers and from other young men ; he exaggerated his importance and his reputation ; he made the lad believe that he was an object of general admiration, and that the grandest thing in the world was to gain distinction as the possessor of supernatural powers. With this object everything was permissible. The man had an apt pupil. Paul has told me

much, and I have learned more from some New York friends now in London. It was the young Italian—he was called Signor Paolo—who attracted the people to the house where this pretender offered supernatural guidance to all who were willing to pay for it. They flocked to ask his advice, or to witness his marvellous quickness and readiness. The money flowed in; the old man has got it all, and will not give Paul any. Eight months ago, they left New York for a tour in Europe, meaning, I suppose, to return with bigger pretences still. You know the rest.'

'He certainly did pretend—tremendous,' said Tom, persistently.

'If he pretends no more, Mr. Langston, will you forgive him?'

'Oh! forgive him? certainly—with the greatest pleasure.' Tom replied, readily. 'There is no question of forgiveness. I knew all along that he was humbugging us, and I set myself to find out. I liked the fellow, I confess, and we got chummy in the evenings, and I supposed he knew all the time

what I thought of him. As for forgiving—why, I declare that nothing in the world ever astonished me so much as to see the way he took it when I showed him how it was done. The man actually fainted! Yet he must have known that I never took him seriously.'

'He thought,' said Bethiah, 'that he had compelled you to take him seriously. And I suppose—oh! I know the poor boy—I am certain that he concluded that you intended to expose him publicly and immediately, and he suddenly realised the shamefulness of the position and his own degradation.'

'Again, touching forgiveness,' Tom went on, 'we are, on the other hand, deeply, very deeply indebted to him for saving a vast sum of money—all we had, some of us. To be sure, he made a miracle of it. What did that matter? In that house, a miracle is neither here nor there. Sibyl has seen so many, that she expects the order of things to be reversed rather than to follow in their usual sequence, whenever a new Medium comes

along. Of course, we despise the Medium ; but in his case we will separate the Medium from the man beneath.'

'We shall always be grateful to him,' said Sibyl. 'Whatever he does cannot destroy our indebtedness. If he marries Hetty and gives up his old pretensions, he may be our friend if he likes.'

'Not,' said Tom, 'that one would commonly choose for a friend a chap who has been convicted of tricks. Yet—hang it—Miss Ruysdael, we did get to like the fellow. And he really was more like a girl than a man, with his soft voice and his big eyes and his smooth cheek. One generally wants to take such a man by the coat collar and shake him up. But he did not inspire that desire. I wonder where he is.'

Things like this—simple things—are always being said at the right moment, so as to produce more of those coincidences for which this world is famous. We may have to deplore many failures—some of our brothers, for instance, are less beautiful than others—and the

history of Man is not a thing of which we can be altogether boastful. But we may be proud of our coincidences. These are served out abundantly, one a day, on an average, to every human creature.

At this very moment a telegram was brought in, addressed to Miss Ruysdael.

‘I am at the Langham Hotel. When can I see you?—Paul.’

‘There,’ said Bethiah, with a sigh of relief. ‘He has not vanished, then, or run away to hide himself. It is just like Paul, to send for me. He used to do the same thing, long years ago, when he was a boy and in any trouble. I shall find him in a state of profound misery, full of self-accusation. Well, I know what to do with him.’

‘What will you do with him?’

‘First, I must bring him here, and leave him alone to have it out with Hetty. He must tell her everything. If she forgives him, which I expect, I will arrange for us all three to go away at once. We will go back to America. But he must marry Hetty first,

in order that he may have somebody always with him to have the care of him.'

'Do you think he may refuse?' asked Tom.

'No, he can never go back to the old life. That is impossible. If I feared that, I would not suffer him to marry Hetty. But he must have someone always with him, if it is only to make him get up and go to bed at proper times, and to see that he works in a healthy manner.'

'What will he do, then?'

'For such a man as Paul there is only one kind of work possible. He must become a journalist and get on presently to become an author perhaps, or a poet. It will not take Paul long to learn the trade, and he will get employment. Oh, Hetty and I have sketched it all out.'

'But before he gets employment,' said Sibyl, 'he will want money. You must suffer us—in common gratitude——'

'No, Sibyl, no. He cannot take any of your money. Do not deprive him of the one

consolation which remains. No one can say that he did—what he did—for money.’

‘But—through Hetty, for instance.’

‘No. Not even through Hetty. There must be no question of money at all. He can never recover self-respect if he takes your money.’

‘You are right, I suppose. Only it seems cruel to let him go away in poverty.’

‘I am the same as his sister. I have enough for all. Besides, there is his father.’

‘Then he has still a father?’ said Tom.

‘Deacon Trinder has the principal store in the town. He has put by dollars, I believe. How he will receive his son after seven years of silence I do not know.’

‘Trinder. Yes, he told me, the other day, that his patronymic was Trinder. Deacon Trinder—and a store—— I suppose a village store, where tea and golden syrup and candles can be bought, and cotton stuffs and currants and ginger and flour and ham and cheese and ribbons and gloves.’

‘Yes and everything else,’ said Bethiah, laughing.

‘It seems a drop from an unknown parentage and an education from the Sages, doesn’t it? Well, Miss Ruysdael, won’t you let us help at all?’

‘No. You must leave him to me, please. If you will see him, Mr. Langston, and shake hands with him before he goes, it would be kind. I don’t know whether the recollection of the fact that you have treated him as a friend will help him out of his slough of despond or not. But it will be kind.’

‘In that case,’ said Tom, affably, ‘he is welcome to two shakes. Seriously, Miss Ruysdael, I shall always remember the Herr Paulus with admiration and gratitude. The happiness and joy that I experienced when I found out how he sent my poor guardian off to Abyssinia, and stole away his senses, and yet made him do just exactly what he pleased, can never be forgotten. At the same time it is best for him to go away. Further acquaint-

ance, after what has passed, would carry with it a little embarrassment, would it not ? ’

‘ I fear so. There is another reason why Hetty must go. Most unfortunately, Paul found out her father, and took her to see him. Well: it is a great pity that he did it, because it seems that the fellow, who is quite a low kind of creature, wants Hetty to take up the spiritualistic business and run it with her mother in the States. He blusters and threatens all kinds of things, but, of course, that means nothing, except that we had better marry them at once, and then he can say no more.’

‘ May I be allowed, good people,’ said Tom, breaking out unexpectedly, ‘ to interrupt this conversation for the purpose of drawing a moral ? Remark, if you please, that all the miracles performed by this great Prophet have brought misfortune to some one. He miraculously shows Cicely her brother at sea, and unsettles her mind, which was beginning to be accustomed to his absence ; then he brings my amiable cousin to see her. What happens?

Percival bullies and frightens his sister, and rounds on Paul, calling him a Liar and a Deceiver and a Medium's Cad. There is a rich reward for a benevolent worker of miracles. Then he restores Hetty to her long-lost father's arms, and the father turns out to be a most undesirable person, who regards his daughter as the means of making large profits if she will lend herself to his untruthful ways. Then he introduces his host to His Eminence Cardinal or Archbishop Izák Ibn Menelek, the Falasha, commonly called Izák the Sage, who gives him gratuitous instructions every morning and imparts wisdom of the most astonishing depth. Unfortunately, the poor man, when the lesson is over, forgets it all immediately, and goes about as melancholy as King Nebuchadnezzar after his dream. He makes Mr. Brudenel, unknown to himself, write a letter ordering the sale of all his shares in a certain Company; unluckily, the poor man has written two other letters on the same day, recommending two friends to buy shares in the same Company, which bursts a

fortnight later. Mr. Brudenel is saved, and his friends are ruined. Naturally, they ask the reasons why he sold out everything on the same day that he advised them to buy in; and when we say that the spirits wrote that letter for him, they sniff. This miracle, of which I desire to speak with gratitude, was the most unlucky that poor Paul ever worked, because everybody knows, now, that he had been told, before Mr. Brudenel wrote that letter, what was the condition of the Company, and besides, it afterwards covered him with confusion, because he now knows that I had found out how he did the trick. And there is no glory out of it at all, partly because we have not published any report of that miracle, which is a private and family miracle, and partly because, as I have said, we know how it was done. Then he brings the paper of the day all the way from India. Does he get any glory from it? Not a bit. They say "Do it again. If it is a genuine thing you can do it when you please. Produce your paper. Don't flourish a dated rag in our faces and snatch it

away. Bring this day's paper from Delhi and let it lie on the table." And he has not responded. Lastly, which puts on the coping stone, the only natural and truthful and honest thing which he has done—his falling in love like a man—has destroyed the only power which he really possessed. He could influence some people—not all. He could magnetise them or mesmerise them, whatever you please to call it, and now he cannot do that. Never was a Prophet so *défroqué*. I would advise you, my sisters, to take this lesson to your chambers and to meditate upon it, and when you wish—you, Sibyl, or you, Miss Ruysdael—to become a Prophet, remember Paul, the son of Deacon Trinder.'

To think that such a truly beautiful discourse should be delivered before an audience of two!

CHAPTER XII.

A PLENARY CONFESSION.

MANY sins shall be forgiven to a man before he marries, provided there is a reasonable prospect of reformation. Hetty was about to hear a confession and to pronounce an absolution. The former brought as much shame to herself as to her lover, but the latter cost her little.

Bethiah brought Paul to the studio and went away shutting the door upon Paul and Hetty. To be sure, she had prepared Hetty beforehand with such excuses and ways of putting things as might soften the blow. You have heard how she put the case to Tom.

‘But,’ said Tom, ‘he did pretend—tremendous.’

That was so. You may explain as elabo-

rately as you please, the process by which the wicked man arriveth at his wickedness ; you may show how he was led by a tempter and driven by a fiend and enticed by a siren ; you may show him poor, starving, and hopeless ; you may explain how his conscience has been soothed and deadened, and how he has come to live in an enchanted castle. The fact remains that he has arrived at his wickedness. It is always an ugly fact ; it cannot be righted ; all we can do is to forgive it.

‘ And, Hetty,’ Bethiah concluded, ‘ whatever Paul has to say, remember that it is all finished and done with. No kind of temptation could ever make him repeat the past. My dear, no one hates spiritualism more than you—except Paul. No one is more ashamed of it than you—except Paul. When you have told me about the shame and the sin of it, the pretences by which silly people are beguiled, and the preparation for the spontaneous manifestations, I have felt as if, of all people in the world, you were the most to be pitied. Because there seemed no escape for

you, anyhow, except to run clean away from all of it. I could not imagine a more horrible lot for any girl than to live half the day in the house where manifestations were prepared, and the other half where they were exhibited and believed. Paul's lot, however, is worse. You have not to reproach yourself. He knows how deeply he has impressed himself on the minds of his friends, and how the whole structure rests upon a colossal falsehood.'

'Not the whole.'

'Yes, the whole. Paul will tell you. He has promised me that he will hide nothing from you. The whole structure, my dear, and not a part only, as you think.'

The most terrible sight in the world—a thing which somehow covers one with shame only to witness—is that of a man confessing a shameful thing, feeling himself the whole shame and guilt of it. If there be really, as many still believe, a day in which the secrets of all hearts shall be laid open, it will be also,

I am sure, a day in which the baseness of those secrets will be fully manifest to every man. We shrink from letting even our dearest friends know our own secret thoughts. But to think of the secrets of all hearts—all hearts—being laid open ! Then the hero and the statesman and the philanthropist and the preacher and the sage will be on the level now occupied by the convict in prison and the convict out ; and where the convict will be, Heaven knoweth, and we shall all be ashamed for each other as well as for ourselves ; and poor Humanity shall hide her guilty head and cover her face and call upon the rocks to fall upon her. It is not enough, you see, to be forgiven. One has also to forgive oneself.

‘ Yes, Paul ; yes, oh ! stop. I cannot bear it,’ cried Hetty, the tears flowing down her cheeks. ‘ I cannot bear any more. Oh ! to think that it is all deception—all. Oh ! my poor mother ! All is deception.’

‘ I speak only of myself,’ he said.

She was lying on the sofa—her face in her hands.

He stood over her, stooping, his hands clenched, his eyes stern and hard, his arms bent. It was as if he was accusing and vehemently reproaching her. But he was not. He was accusing himself, though every word fell upon the girl like a blow from a heavy stick.

‘You must hear all,’ he repeated.

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Well, it was done. He had no more to say. He had confessed everything.

‘Tell me to go, Hetty,’ he said, at last.

She gave him her hand.

‘You must go, Paul. But I must go with you.’

‘I loathe myself, Hetty. I could kill myself but for you, and for the thought that even by killing myself I should not escape.’

‘Oh! How dreadful—how terrible it is!’ said the girl. ‘All my life I have had the horrible pretence about me, and I could never

escape it. And to think that even the man who loves me—oh, who loves me—should have been dragged into it. Oh, my poor Paul, shall we carry the sham spirits and the mock messages about with us? If we go away together, far away, where nobody will know my maiden name or your story, do you think that they will follow too, and will go on rapping messages and playing concertinas?’

‘No, Hetty, no. We shall leave them behind us, and all the inventions and lies of the craft. We will go and live among the woods out of the reach of them. Only love me, Hetty, if you can, and forgive me.’

‘Oh, Paul, if I can love you!’

‘And forgive me?’ he repeated.

‘If I can forgive you!’ She laughed and cried together. ‘You do not understand, Paul. There is nothing that I could not forgive you, even if you went back to the old life. I could forgive everything, even if it broke my heart.’

‘My dear, what should I deserve if I went back to the old life?’ He had been bending

humbly over her. Now he suddenly sprang upright and threw out his arms. 'Oh,' he cried, 'it is all gone. I feel like Christian when he threw off his bundle. I am breathing a purer air already. I broke the last chain that bound me when I told you the whole. Help to make me forgive myself—and forget, Hetty. Lift up your head, dear. These shall be the last tears you shall shed for me. Kiss me. Let us talk of this new life. Bethiah says that you will take care of me. She says that I know nothing. You will teach me, then. I am not afraid of work, though I do not know what work you will set me to do. Only find me work, even if it is rail splitting, and I will do it for you, Hetty. What a fool I was! And all seemed so grand that nothing but supernatural assistance could account for it. I was in a Fool's Paradise, and the way out of Fool's Paradise is through briers and brambles, and across the Great Dismal Swamp.'

Well, he had said all he had to say. And

Hetty loved him still. She loved him, I think, all the more, because of the courage of this self-inflicted humiliation. Many sins, I said, will be forgiven before marriage. After marriage they are condoned—which is not quite the same thing—or passively endured, or even accepted as part of life. Even suburban builders, I believe, have wives.

It happened, while this pair of lovers sat hand in hand, with tearful eyes and softened hearts, whispering to each other words of consolation and hope, that Mr. Medlock, returning home, learned that his daughter was sitting alone with her *fiancé* in Miss Ruysdael's room. At ordinary times this information would have caused him to respect the sanctity of the room with the greatest carefulness, because, you see, he was afraid of his daughter. But this afternoon he felt bold. Perhaps he had acquired courage after the manner erroneously attributed to the Hollander, though a single glass of hot rum and water with a slice of lemon and one lump of sugar is nothing but an old-fashioned

stomachic after an early dinner, like your worship's glass of port, and, I doubt not, affects the head no more. Perhaps, however, the chance of introducing the subject emboldened him.

Hetty indeed had so far showed in her outward carriage little or no respect for him. She knew what he wanted her to do—how could she respect him? And he was so mean of aspect and of manner: and he had lived such an ignoble life. To travel around with a show; to lecture at a panorama; to lead about a giant or a dwarf; to companionise a two-headed Nightingale—it is not immoral, but it is not ennobling. And to ask your daughter to go on the platform as a clairvoyante is to deprive yourself of all the privileges conferred by the Fifth Commandment.

Yet Mr. Haynes Medlock, as we know, had been arranging a little scheme for the future: the programme, in fact, of a Show which for Talent and Completeness would eclipse every Spiritualist Caravan ever wheeled before the public. Lavinia, as the Sibyl in extreme age,

in crimson velvet; Hetty, the World-renowned Clairvoyante; the Signor Paolo, already famous from the Pacific to the Atlantic shores; in direct communication with Spirits who cannot lie; with himself as the Illustrious Craniologist, Professor of Palmistry, or Graphiologist, as the case might be. The prospect was splendid. And now the most important member of the Company was engaged to the next in importance, and was at that moment under his own roof, courting his own gal, and no doubt in an amiable and yielding mood. Mr. Medlock thereupon tapped at the door and coughed. To cough when you rap at a door is—I don't know why—the surest sign of the suppliant. The man who would like something on account, something in advance, a temporary loan, an interview for an explanation, always coughs when he knocks at the door. As no one replied, Mr. Medlock turned the handle and opened the door.

Hetty drew her hand from her lover's and rose from the sofa where they were sitting.

‘Do you want anything?’ she asked, with severity. ‘This is Miss Ruysdael’s room.’

‘I wish, my dear,’ he replied—a girl ought not to be taller than her own father. ‘I came’—nor ought she to look at a parent in such a terrifying manner. ‘I am sorry to interrupt. I was wishful of a few words with your—my intended son-in-law, Hetty. A few words only.’ He coughed again, behind his hand, in an exasperating way. There was really very little to be proud of in his personal appearance.

Hetty turned to Paul.

‘This is my father,’ she said, with the least possible emphasis of the pronoun, as if to convey that in the matter of fathers she was not richly endowed, ‘and he has something to communicate to you, Paul—a proposition of some kind to make. In fact, I know what it is, but I think you may as well hear it.’ One must not condemn any proposition unheard, but there was something about the young lady’s tone which did convey unqualified condemnation of that proposition beforehand.

‘Well, sir.’ Paul rose and offered his hand: it was perhaps remarkable that in returning to the world of the Phenomenal—the everyday world—he had also returned to a strongly marked American manner of speech. ‘Well, sir, what can I do for you—or you for me?’

‘We can do, sir, a great deal for each other. We can make ourselves indispensable to each other. That I shall be able to prove to you in a very few words.’

‘Very well, sir. You remember when you called upon my old master, the Professor, a fortnight or so since. You had a talk with him and you made him a proposition.’

‘I did. It is quite true. He knows everything, Hetty—everything. That’s what they used to say of him in New York. No question but he had an answer to it, and always right.’ Hetty looked anxious, but only for a moment.

‘I am right now,’ Paul said, quietly, ‘because I was in the other room and the door was open and I heard what you said.’

Hetty's face indicated relief. 'Therefore, I know beforehand what you have been doing in the States, and what you would like to do when you go back—so far as I myself am concerned.'

'And will do, sir; and will do,' said the little man, kindling with enthusiasm at what looked like a good beginning. 'You have no idea—you can't have any idea—of the splendid success that I will make of you.'

'Pray go on, Mr. Medlock.'

'I take it, sir, that in your last show—I mean in the salon where you received the cream of the New York aristocracy—pretty well all the money went to the boss.'

'You have no right to say that,' Hetty interrupted.

'Well, I've been assistant, and I ought to know, and so far as I do know, nearly all the money does go to the boss. It did wherever I was assistant.'

'Go on,' said Paul.

'What I say is this, then—leave the old man. Run your own show. Leave the old

man. Get a man who knows his way about to run it for you.'

'Meaning yourself.'

'I do mean myself. I couldn't mean a better man for the work. I know pretty well every town in America, if you conclude to travel, and I know my way about New York, or Philadelphia either, if you conclude to stay there. You are going to marry my daughter, sir, I believe.'

'I am,' said Paul, 'since your daughter consents.'

'She ought to consent with pride and alacrity. I should, if I were my daughter.'

'If you were, I should not ask you,' said Paul.

'Well, sir, well. I won't insist on my rights as a father. I've been too long separated from my child to exercise those rights. I know that very well. But I ask you, sir—I put it to you as a reasonable man—here are you—A 1, tip-top of the profession, the cleverest and the most envied man of all, on the highest rung. I grant all that. The

connection, I admit, brings honour to us all.' Paul looked at Hetty with a smile, of the sadder kind. 'But there's another side. What is talent unless it's stage-managed and business-managed? Wasted, lost, thrown away. That's where I come in. Signor Paolo's agent is his father-in-law, experienced and tried and zealous. What is talent run by itself? Soon worn out; worn to death. That's where your mother-in-law steps in. See at a circus. Between the really creditable bits, the clown runs round—anybody can run round—and the young lady jumps through the hoops—any girl can jump through hoops—and they're just as well pleased. Lavinia, with a white wig and crimson velvet, will hold one of her celebrated séances while you are resting. I assure you, sir, that got up in a white wig—and plenty of it—and in crimson velvet, with heavy gold chains and plenty of them, your mother-in-law would rake 'em in. She would, indeed. There's very little new to be had, in reality; but your manager will always be putting up old

things in new dresses. And then there's Hetty. You are aware, sir, that my daughter has the making in her of a really first-class clairvoyante. In your hands she would develop into the best clairvoyante in the world. A good clairvoyante is scarce. I don't quite know where to lay my hand on one that I could confidently put forward. But Hetty! Look at her, sir. Look at her figure and her face. Look at her eyes——'

'Paul!'

'You have said quite enough, Mr. Medlock,' said Paul. 'It is useless to go on, because our minds are made up. Nothing would induce your daughter to play the part you propose—nothing in the world. That is fixed and decisive, and nothing would induce her to allow me to continue in the—profession—you called it. Therefore——'

'Leave the profession? You to leave the profession? The great Signor Paolo to leave the profession? Why you must—but perhaps you have made your fortune?'

'No, I have not.'

‘Then why—why?’

‘Because it is—the profession. That is why. I do not think you would understand any other reason.’

‘Leave the profession! And haven’t made your fortune! Then, sir, I’m hanged if you shall marry my daughter.’

Hetty laughed. It is wrong to laugh at your own father, but she did laugh.

‘I think there is no good in talking about it any more,’ said Paul, quietly. ‘Your daughter is of age. Will you leave us now, Mr. Medlock?’

‘Hetty,’ he said, ‘I could laugh at the poor man; I could laugh at the whole business. Now, alas! we can never laugh at it, either of us; even in the future, however far back in our lives it has receded. Kiss me, Hetty. Oh! let us get away quickly; let us begin our new life as soon as ever we can.’

CHAPTER XIII.

THE CONFERENCE.

THINGS have got to such a pass with Conferences that the papers refuse any longer to report them. This is sad, because in former days many a small man thought to become great, and many a weak man thought himself strong, merely by dint of reading at a Conference, papers which the wicked favouritism of Editors would not allow to be published. Also, the Conference gave all who were present and whose names were reported, the consciousness to themselves, and the appearance to others, of belonging to the Van of Science and Progress. Conferences, as a natural consequence, are falling into discredit. One Conference, formerly famous, has been abandoned in disgust, after it became a bore, not

only to the general public, but even to its own friends.

The Conference of Spiritualists, held last May, although a most important and truly representative gathering, was not reported by the morning papers. That is the reason why a certain remarkable incident, which shall be faithfully recorded here, made no impression on the public mind. One or two of the evening papers, to be sure, accorded some slight notice to the meeting. The 'St. James's,' in a nasty sneering one, made the noses of all those who took part in the Conference to swell and burn. The 'Pall Mall,' in a short article, gibed at the President, and asked the usual stale old questions as to the practical outcome of so many years' messages. It is, however, better to be derided than neglected. Ridicule calls attention ; misrepresentation allows an answer. It is silence which is deadly. Reporters were not sent to this Conference. And yet the subjects prepared for discussion—there was not time for all of them—covered nearly the whole vast field once contemplated

by the student who proposed to write the History of Human Error. Had the programme been carried out in its entirety, the Conference would be sitting to this day. Among the subjects, men, and peoples set down for discussion, were the Chaldeans, the Sabeans, the Cabeiri, the Eleusinian Mysteries, the Cabbalists, the Magi, the Essenes, the Esoteric Buddhists, the Zendavesta, Confucius, Zoroaster, Pythagoras, apparitions, telepathy, incarnated spirits, spirit pictures, spirit writing, Madame Blavatzky—but not Madame Colomb—dreams, clairvoyance, the Brotherhood of the Rosy Cross, the Secret of the Rose, Theosophy, Cornelius Agrippa, Lilith and the Larvæ, Akaz, Yogi, Koot Houn, Karma, Hermes, Mithra, the Rod of Jacob, Invocation, Evocation, the Pentagram, the Book of Thoth, Mesmerism, Astrology, Second Sight, Palmistry, Healing by Will, the Works of Eliphaz, the Teraphim, Abracadabra, and the Astral Light; not to speak of Nostradamus, Mother Shipton, and Old Moore—and without mentioning those who came on the chance of

being heard as to the Israelitish origin of the British people.

The Conference lasted a week, during which these and many kindred subjects were discussed. When the meeting broke up, the members, wearied but not satiated, agreed that on the score of unanimity the Conference had been a most wonderful success. No nasty scientific man or philosopher (foolishly so called) had got up to question and contradict: the carping and critical spirit was conspicuously absent; none—which was most remarkable—came to mock; none stayed to deride; and, but for one single hitch, the progress of business was throughout uninterrupted and smooth. Nay, the only thing that was wanting, those who were present agreed, was more discussion. If any fault could be found with the Conference it was that the leaders, those who had been invited to read papers, showed undisguised impatience with the papers which preceded theirs, and did not pretend any interest in any subject outside their own. This gave an air of haste and

breathlessness to the meetings: a lack of personal dignity was observed: the more sober among the audience lamented that time was not given for discussion and comparison of arguments. Papers concerning the Unseen World ought not to be read and then pushed aside as if they were merely papers in the 'Contemporary' and the 'Nineteenth Century,' dealing with the things of this world.

The papers read at the Conference will, however, be published before long, when men from the ends of the earth will no doubt read them. It is a favourite delusion with people that if they once get a thing printed all the world will read it. I know a man who once wrote a book, proving conclusively, beyond every possibility of doubt, that what the world wants in order to be completely happy and to get the full flavour out of every hour as it hurries past is to——; but on this point I refer you to his book. It was published at his own expense by a very eminent Firm of Publishers fifteen years ago. Strange to say, the world has never made the least

move in the direction indicated by that book. 'And,' he says, reproachfully, 'my book has been in their hands all these years!' So it has, in a way of speaking. 'In their hands!' Oh! those careless hands! In fifteen years, fifteen thousand books have been placed in those hands; and the hands go on just as if they had not had more than half-a-dozen given to them.

One cannot report the whole, or even a sixth part, of this Conference. I have only to narrate the exact circumstances relating to the single hitch which occurred at the first morning's meeting.

The hall, a room of some size, was, what reporters call, well filled. That is to say, there was plenty of sitting-room for everyone, and the galleries were half occupied. A well-filled room. And all of them, apparently, ladies and gentlemen; that is to say, they were well dressed and well behaved. Anyone not *en rapport* with the meeting would have observed a fidgety manner as if everybody had, more or less, got the jumps. Some

there were who closed their eyes in silent meditation; others there were whose eyes glowed with a strange brightness; these were restless, and got up and down and changed their seats; others, again, sat waiting in impatience for the expected rapture which would seize their souls at the right moment. For a meeting can be magnetised even more easily than a single person, and presently, when the right man speaks with the right voice, and the right gaze which meets and holds every eye, you shall see this multitude awed and subdued into calm; the bright unsteady eyes fixed, the lips parted, the heart glowing, the soul in a brief ecstasy. Such things sober men have recorded; mankind is emotional; it is with all of us even as with the dervishes or with the Hallelujah lasses when the contagion of emotion spreads from bench to bench. The platform was occupied by the leaders, among them our friends Mr. Athelstan Kilburn, the Rev. Amelius Horton—he was going to read a paper on his own miraculous gift of healing—the Rev. Benjamin Rudge,

and Mr. Emanuel Chick. In the body of the hall were to be observed Lavinia Medlock, her husband, and Mr. James Berry. Hetty was not there, but Sibyl, the infidel, had brought Cicely. Mrs. Tracy Hanley was also present. At the stroke of ten the President, Mr. Cyrus Brudenel, accompanied by his wife, Lady Augusta, and followed by the Honorary Secretary, appeared upon the platform, and with some applause from the audience took the chair.

Then, after the preliminary look around—which no President ever neglects—it is a reminiscence of the schoolmaster's habit of looking round to see that every boy is in his place, Mr. Brudenel rose, and delivered the opening address. In every address there are interesting parts and flat parts. Let us confine our report to one or two of the most interesting parts.

‘Friends and Fellow-students,’ he began, pleased at the number of his audience and warmed by the visible proof of so large a sympathy. ‘Friends and Fellow-students.

Let us congratulate ourselves upon the magnitude and importance of this meeting, as proved by numbers only. For the first time in history, we who devote our lives to Spiritual Research and Endeavour after deeper and closer and readier communication with the other world, meet openly in public without fear of repression or derision. Four hundred years ago they would have burned us as sorcerers and witches; two hundred years ago we should have been a small, obscure body, unable to meet, because unconscious of each other's existence; one hundred years ago, those who still kept alive the Sacred Lamp were reduced almost to the point of extinction. Only here and there one who prevented the spark from vanishing and fed the feeble light which to the outer world seemed extinguished for ever. One hundred years ago? Why, no one believed that we were still surviving. Our Cause was a bye-word. Even fifty years ago, when some of us were boys, what was the condition of the Spiritualists? They were absolutely unknown. Literature

had ceased to speak of them. Ridicule no longer clung to them, because they were not believed to exist. They were considered to belong to the Dark Ages. Godwin's 'Lives of the Necromancers' sufficiently attests the low estimation—the contempt—in which they were held. Suppose this congress had been summoned fifty years ago, how many would have attended? Who would have been invited to speak? In some obscure college room at Oxford or Cambridge there would have been found, sitting among his old books, one here or there who knew something of the Mysteries and knew what was meant by Initiation and what by communication with the Spirits—but he would not dare to speak of these things in the Hall or the Combination Room. He would have been locked up as a madman. Yet, Fellow-students, look at us to-day.'

The President then proceeded to sketch briefly the history of modern Spiritualism from its revival in 1847, when the famous rappings were first heard in America, to the present time, dwelling upon the wonderful develop-

ment of communications and the vast strides made in so short a period, so that if the same rate of progress be maintained, we may hope, he said, within a hundred years, to combine with the spirits as freely as with each other, in which case all our books may be burned, because all the learning that we want will be derived at will and just for the trouble of asking from those unearthly teachers. He also took the opportunity of naming, with the highest praise, those immortal pioneers who have one after the other taken up the Cause and laboured to reduce a mere series of experiments to an exact science. Among these he did not omit the illustrious Sludge (commemorated in Browning's deathless verse), the devoted Home, Slade the spotless, Emanuel Chick, and Lavinia Medlock. 'These men and women,' he acknowledged, 'have had, it is true, during their professional career, to contend with much misrepresentation: they have met with ridicule; their motives have been distorted and derided; the facts of the manifestations have been doubted; their good faith

has been denied ; their antecedents have been inquired into and mis-stated. In short, they have encountered enemies and detractors. All great men do. What then ? Truth will prevail. We can afford to wait, even to wait long after this life.'

He then dwelt upon the great advance made during the last few years, speaking from his own knowledge of the power possessed by Emanuel Chick and by Lavinia Medlock among the Mediums of the day. This was kind of him, because everybody knew that he had now deserted the old paths and begun to consult other oracles.

'But now, Fellow-students, I have to speak of events which have happened, not only to my own knowledge and under my own eyes, but actually to myself and to those of my own household. What follows is a history.

'Many of you have heard part of this history. Things have been whispered about. Nay, the papers have given garbled and imperfect notes of what has been done in my

house. But it has been left for this Conference to hear the truth concerning the most wonderful, the most startling, the most extraordinary manifestations of modern times.

‘We heard from St. Petersburg from our friend, Anna Petrovna, that we were to receive a visit from a young spiritualist of whose powers she spoke in terms which excited our highest expectations. He spoke, she said, all languages equally well, but only that of the country where he happened to be for the time. With her he spoke Russian: with us he would speak English. He was coming to England charged with a Message to me and to my household. There would be no question at all of money. I was not to offer him fees or payment of any kind: his wants were amply provided for, and she begged us to receive him as a person of the highest distinction, whose stay would confer great honour upon us.

‘We expected our guest with impatience: we received him with delight. We were not

disappointed in him. We found a young man, apparently about five-and-twenty, possessed of manners which were charming, good breeding, the self-possession which comes of belonging by birth to the best society, and of a beauty which I can only describe as supernatural. I have seen nothing in earthly faces which I can compare with the face of our visitor. His voice was gentle and musical, and the sight of his eyes, soft and lustrous, yet full of power and authority, commanded respect and awe. For six weeks or so we were ravished out of ourselves by a continued series of manifestations, the like of which we had never before experienced. Paul—he allowed us to Anglicise the German form of his name, Herr Paulus—first proved his powers by reading a girl's thoughts, and then showing them actually photographed—we have seen thought-reading and recognised it as a branch, and no mean branch, of communion between soul and soul—but we had never before seen such a thing as spirit photography applied to thought-read-

ing. Again, he made a blind girl see her brother, then at sea ; and he photographed the picture of what she saw. On another occasion he annihilated space and time, and actually placed in our astonished hands the daily paper—that very morning's issue—published at Delhi. There were many persons present at this miracle, among them scientific professors of the highest repute. I have not heard that any attempt has been made to explain the method of accomplishing this marvel, though I have heard a demand to have it repeated. It is always the way. When we tell the world of some new and startling manifestation, we are desired to do it again. I dare say it will be done again, but we Spiritualists prefer to move in our own way. We shall not be bullied or driven into experiments which our friends on the Other Side do not appreciate.

‘ Again, Paul healed the sick. Not, certainly, those who had diseases for which the surgeon is wanted, but those who suffered from disorders of a nervous nature, such as

Spiritualists are able to relieve. Those who had neuralgia, toothache, headache, and ailments of like nature, Paul restored to health by the simple exercise of will.

‘Again—and this I declare solemnly to you as my own personal experience—Paul brought me an invitation from one of the friends resident in Abyssinia that I would visit him every morning to converse upon the Divine Philosophy of which we hear so much and know so little. Fellow-students, I rejoice to be able to affirm that I have spent morning after morning in a certain valley in that far off country, beside a stream with the venerable Izák Ibn Menelek, in such discussion as lifts up the soul and enlarges the mind. It will be my privilege and my happiness to write down for the benefit of the whole world the teaching of that Sage as soon—as soon’—here the President’s eyes grew troubled and he tapped his knuckles with his eye-glasses—‘as soon as my mind can free itself from the splendour and the intoxication of that wisdom, and settle down

calmly to write. There is one thing more. Finally, my new Friends, finding out the actual financial position of a certain Company—perhaps you know the Company—in which I had invested the whole fortunes of my two wards and my daughter, caused me, without my knowledge, to write letters commanding the sale of those investments. My Fellow-students, on the day on which unconsciously I wrote—if I did write—those letters, I also—consciously and in good faith—wrote two others recommending the purchase of shares in that very Company, so strong was my belief in its stability. My friends took my advice, I deeply regret to say, and suffered. The orders to sell were obeyed, and my wards were saved.

‘Ladies and gentlemen, most of us here present have long felt convinced of the reality of spirit communications. Many among us, I say, have long been standing with their feet planted upon the Solid Rock. Others there are, perhaps, of—of—lesser faith, who require a succession of manifesta-

tions in order to make them constantly realise the presence of the spirits about us, around us, over us. There are, again, others, of whom I am one, consistent and complete believers, whose minds are filled with those evidences of sight, touch, and hearing which nothing can overcome, who yet are always delighted to hail every new brother in the Craft and to recognise every new manifestation, however crude and simple, provided that it be only genuine.

‘I ask you,’ he continued, waxing eloquent, ‘if anything short of supernatural force—energy—will—call it what you please, so long as you admit that it was something supernatural, over and beyond the powers and perceptions of ordinary man—I ask you, I say, if anything short of supernatural force can account for these miracles? Has any thought-reader before this made a girl tell what was in her mind and then show those present her thoughts photographed? Has any Spiritualist before this ever made a blind girl see, and shown a photograph of her

vision? Has any Occult Philosopher — of whose miracles we hear much—ever produced in India the London “Times” of that very day? Never. They have been challenged to do so, and they cannot. Their powers do not extend so far—as yet. This proves that the wisdom of the Abyssinian is greater than the wisdom of the Thibetan, as we might expect. There are, it is true, some who have the gift of Healing—our friend Mr. Amelius Horton is one of those rarely gifted men; but I have never seen the exercise of that gift so spontaneous, so free, so ready, as by my young Philosopher, Herr Paulus. As for the other things—the interposition of his Friends —without his knowledge, to save my children’s fortune—it speaks for itself. That these things have been done: that they have been attested by witnesses hostile as well as friendly; that they are not to be challenged by the most determined enemy of our Cause—marks, I declare, a step upwards, which lands us all upon a Higher Plane.’ He spread his arms and threw back his head as if to

breathe the purer and rarer air upon that elevation.

‘Upon this Plane—nay, I know and feel—we shall commune with a nobler kind of spirit and more easily and more freely than before. We all know that we have been frequently misled and betrayed by mocking and mendacious spirits. It is reasonable to hope that on this higher Plane they will not be permitted to dwell—unless that vision of Swedenborg’s is true which showed the spirits choosing the Planes on which they would dwell, and being compelled by their nature to dwell only on those which fitted their stage of development. Think—my friends—oh! think of the time when we shall all converse freely and uninterruptedly with the spirits of the wise, of the just and righteous, of those whom we have loved. We shall be face to face with them. We shall see them, I am well assured, as well as talk with them. When death lays us low, our spirits will join them, and the living and the dead shall not be separated even for an instant. Then all

will seek the higher life, because it will be a shame in the eyes of those who see all that we do and know all that we think, to lead the lower life. There will be nothing but emulation of all the virtues, with meditative study, and striving after truth. The old will not regret their youth, because before their death they see and feel the joys of the other world.

‘All this, we knew, was to come some time or other. It has already come. The man who brought this power to us is Herr Paulus. Let us, before we proceed to the business of the meeting of which this story is, I am sure, a welcome witness, pass our best thanks to Herr Paulus.’

The motion was carried by acclamation.

‘I may, therefore,’ said the President, smiling sweetly, ‘convey to Herr Paulus the fact that it is your pleasure to thank him for what he has done, and done so well. I must, however, tell you one very singular circumstance connected with this business. To my mind this circumstance corroborates

and confirms all that went before. Herr Paulus assured us, when he came, that he was a Messenger only; he brought a Message; he showed his credentials in the powers which he possessed. Very well. During the time that he was delivering this Message he had lost his memory as to himself and his antecedents; he knew nothing; he could not tell how he had been taken to Abyssinia or by whom, or from what country; he had no parents and no relations; he spoke and wrote all languages equally well as the occasion demanded. In Russia he spoke Russian; in Germany, German; in France, French; in England, English; and in each country he could speak only the language of that country. Observe: the moment the Message was delivered and what he had been sent to do had been accomplished, he lost all his powers; he could do nothing; he became like any ordinary young man; he is no longer now a Medium.

‘More than this. He began to lose the memory of what he had done, and why it had

been done, and everything. And he began to remember about himself and his early life—interesting, but not remarkable or unusual. He was, in fact, a messenger caught in Russia, I believe, carried away in the spirit to Abyssinia, charged with powers and with knowledge, and conveyed to my house for the execution and delivery of the Message. The Wise Men might have chosen any other mode of conveying that Message. It is no business of ours to ask why they chose that particular way. I take it that a Message delivered through a young man, handsome and well-mannered, attractive in himself, would commend itself to us more readily than the same message delivered, say, by means of the ordinary Medium. However, I state the plain fact. Your vote of thanks shall be conveyed by me to Herr Paulus. We will now, ladies and gentlemen, proceed to the regular order of the day. The programme before us is a very heavy one. Those who have prepared papers are invited to read only essential parts, and if we have time for discussion I beg

that speakers will be brief, and confine themselves strictly to the points in question. I now call upon the Rev. Amelius Horton to read a paper on "Healing by Will."

The Senior Fellow of King Henry's rose and stepped to the front with a sweet smile and a roll of paper, which he began to unfold. No practised speaker unfolds his papers until it is time to begin. In all public performances there are certain little ceremonies which the actor calls 'business.' The popular statesman for instance, likes to arrive a little late, so as to come on after the minor stars are seated. Therefore Mr. Horton, while standing before the expectant audience, began by unrolling and smoothing out his papers. That would make them expect a little longer and enjoy all the more whatever might follow.

He had, however, to postpone that paper for a few minutes. For while he stood there, a young man, whom no one had noticed sitting just below, rose and leaped upon the platform.

'Mr. President,' he said, 'I beg permission

to say a few words in this room before the proceedings go on. Ladies and gentlemen, *I am Herr Paulus.*'

The President turned very red, and then pale.

'Paul,' he whispered hoarsely, not loud enough for the people in the front part of the hall to hear, 'Paul, sit down and go away. Do not speak, I implore you.'

'I must speak.'

'Ladies and gentlemen'—the President rose with some dignity—'Herr Paulus cannot be refused a hearing after what has been said about him. You will, however, remember what I told you. He has unfortunately lost those powers which were lent to him for a time—and for a purpose.'

'I have a confession to make,' said Paul, lifting his head quickly.

The appearance of the young man startled everybody, and there was a dead silence, and the young girls murmured 'Oh!' softly, and without looking at each other, because he was so beautiful a young man. No young man

in a picture—not even in the old steel-engraving days, when they could put so dazzling a gleam into the eyes, and so soft a light over the brow, and such a romantic dimple in the chin, and such a careless wave in the hair, and such genius in the necktie tied in a sailor's knot—ever looked so romantic and so beautiful as Herr Paulus, the Messenger of the Wise Men, standing on that platform. Sibyl only, by the red spot in his cheeks, knew what it cost him to stand there—in a pillory of his own making, where the bad eggs and the dead cats, and the putrid fowls and the rotten apples would be represented by eyes—the eyes of the assembled two thousand—full of contempt and loathing.

‘My confession,’ he said, ‘is this. Two months ago I came to England in the hope and with the design of making a great *coup*—not of money, but of what could afterwards be turned into money. I resolved to achieve something that could not on any possible hypothesis be explained except by the admission of supernatural force. Science was

not to be able to suggest anything. It was to be something outside the ordinary phenomena of Spiritualists. When it was done, I thought, I would vanish suddenly and be no more seen. Or I would go away and return to New York, flushed with a triumph which would raise me head and shoulders above my brother Spiritualists. You have heard what I did.'

'I think it right,' said the President, 'to remind the audience again of what I have already twice told them. I mean that this young gentleman has clean forgotten the powers which once he exercised, and now cannot understand or believe the things that he achieved.'

'I do not wish to take up the time of the meeting,' Paul went on, as if the President had not spoken. 'I have only to explain that the things I accomplished were such as everybody could do with the aid of an accomplishment which most people can have if they set themselves to work. I was a mesmerist—I understood, in practice, what you call the Art of

mesmerism. I had worked for seven years on the subject, making experiments of all kinds. I succeeded in being able to make those persons who became subject to me think and do exactly as I pleased. I also succeeded in making them remember what I had made them think. You now understand that I had in my hands an instrument of tremendous power, provided I could subject a sufficient number of persons. In this English household, to which I introduced myself, I subjected every person except two. Had I succeeded with those two, you would have heard tales of mystery compared with which your President's history would have appeared commonplace. But these two persons defied me. I never acquired the least control over them. And one of them was always on the watch to find me out. He did find out, in fact, how I accomplished the great feat of saving the fortunes of himself and the two young ladies. Remember, I could mesmerise. That was the foundation of everything. That explains everything. I made the blind girl

see her brother. I knew where the man was, and I had prepared the photograph beforehand. I mesmerised Mr. Brudenel, and made him write at my dictation; and before I brought him back I filled his mind with the rigmarole about Abyssinia. He thinks he went there every morning. He never went anywhere; he sat in his chair, magnetised, in a mesmeric sleep every day. As for the Indian paper, it was a mere trick. The paper had the imprint, and the appearance of the day and the place, but inside there was nothing. I took care that it should not be opened, and while they talked I put it back in my pocket. All that was done by me in that house was sheer pretence and trickery. You ask me how I dare to stand before you and make this confession. I dare it because I have left the ranks of the charlatans. I am no longer a Medium. As for your Spiritualism, I neither believe it, nor do I disbelieve it. But one thing I know well. In America, where there are many Mediums, there is not one who has not been charged, some time or

other, with fraud and falsehood. There is not one who can boast a clear record. And another thing I know full well. There is not a single message purporting to come from the spirits, which has advanced human knowledge one single inch, or that has been above the intellect of the man or woman whose mediumship was employed. You may argue that Spiritualism places the immortality of the soul beyond possible doubt or question. Why so? Because you believe in your Mediums. How much safer are you than the Christians who believe in Christ and His Apostles?

‘I will say little more. In your presence I declare that this confession of mine is literally and exactly true. In your presence I humbly ask pardon of Lady Augusta first, of Mr. Cyrus Brudenel next, and of all those who constitute his household, for intruding my unworthy presence into their house, and for the long series of deceptions and falsehoods which I carried on. I am going away, and I shall never return to a city which would always remind me of a shameful past. Before

I depart I make submission and confession.'

He bowed low : first to the audience, and then to Lady Augusta, and then to the President.

'Paul !' cried Lady Augusta.

He bowed a second time, but made no reply. Then he slowly descended the steps, and walked with bowed head through the wondering assemblage.

Then Lady Augusta sprang to her feet.

'I *must* speak,' she cried. 'Never before have I spoken in public, and never again shall I speak. You have heard that unhappy boy. He has lost his powers, and he tries to account for what he did by a theory of magnetic influence. Do not his very words—the part of his confession which was wrung from him—the acknowledgment of the facts—prove his supernatural possession? That possession has left him. He has a confused memory of what happened. He knows that in New York he practised spiritualism and used magnetic influence. Whether for pur-

poses of fraud, I do not know. And the rest he cannot understand. Oh ! I knew all along that this man was not himself. No young man could speak as he spoke ; no mere youth could make our hearts glow as Paul made the hearts of those who heard him. Never, I think, did any man rise to such lofty heights of wisdom and fill his hearers with visions of the glories and splendours of the other world. Our Paul has gone—you have seen his Shell. It is now a Shell filled with a commonplace soul, no whit above his fellows, and perhaps below them. But while he stayed with us—a time never to be forgotten—we were rapt into Heaven. It was not the manifestation of power which enthralled us—it was the voice of this man. You have heard but the faintest echo of the music of that voice—it was the beauty of the man's face. You will never see the splendour of that beauty—it was the depth, the love, the holiness of his eyes, wherein lay all wisdom. You will never see those eyes. He has gone : our Paul has gone. Sad—sad to think that this Shell has not gone

too. I pray you, oh, my friends and fellow-seekers, let not the words of that young American, who has just left this room, trouble you. We who have heard—have seen—who can testify—we only know how false are those words—how utterly meaningless they are to explain the Wonder and the Mystery, the heights and the depths of the Heavenly Wisdom which Paul was sent to teach us. My husband and I are now endeavouring to commit to paper such of those utterances which we can remember. Alas! would that we had known how short a time he would be with us! One thing comforts us. He promised before his powers left him that his Friends would give us the Book of the Ancient Wisdom, the same which was written by King Solomon himself and given by the first Priest Isaac to Menelek, Prince of Abyssinia. We await that gift.'

Lady Augusta resumed her seat. She had spoken with such vehemence, with such earnestness of words and gestures and looks, that she carried her audience completely

away. The young American who had just left them was an impostor and a Charlatan—he was only the Shell of Paul, and the real Paul had gone to join his friends, the Sages of the Ancient Way. They breathed again; confidence was restored. They were no longer a flock of silly sheep following any leader who led the way. The dismay and doubt which had been caused by that confession vanished, and they were again ready for More.

The President rose and replaced the glasses with which he had been tapping his knuckles.

‘My friends,’ he said, ‘you have heard my wife. I am quite certain that there is now no doubt in any of our hearts. The true Paul has gone from us—for a time only, we hope—let the Shell, the Shell,’ they all felt an infinite contempt for the Shell, ‘depart in peace. But as the result of the teachings and the manifestations of our Paul, we stand—we stand, I say—upon the Solid Rock.’

‘We will now proceed to the order of the day. Once more I call upon the Reverend Amelius Horton to read us his paper on “Healing by Will.”’

‘Take me out, Sibyl,’ Cicely whispered. ‘If I stay here I shall suffocate. Take me out quickly.’

Sibyl led her out and they drove home.

In the carriage Cicely said nothing, but sat with clasped hands and trembling lips.

Hetty was in her room. She had been crying, and the tears were still in her eyes.

‘Oh ! Cicely,’ she said. ‘Poor Cicely !’

‘I have heard him,’ said Cicely. ‘Hetty, will you take a message to him from me ?’

‘Yes,’ said Hetty, humbly.

‘Tell him that I loved him, Hetty. Not as you do, dear, because you love the man—I loved the Teacher. Tell him that at the fall of his foot and the sound of his voice my pulse quickened, and my cheeks glowed, and my heart rose higher within me. Tell him that he has given me new thoughts and nobler thoughts. Tell him that many things

which before had no meaning to me, are now plain and clear.'

'Yes,' said Hetty, 'I will tell him all you say, dear.'

'Tell him that I can never forget the things he taught me. For the sake of them I shall go on loving his memory. And as for the things he told us to-day—if they are true——'

'They are true,' said Hetty. 'Alas! they are all quite, quite true.'

'Then I pity and forgive him. I could not see him again—it would be too much to hear his voice and to think that he was ever playing a part—but no—he was not—he was speaking from his heart. Oh! Hetty, tell him that I forgive him.'

'I will tell him, Cicely. There is something that I should like to tell you—something which he said last night—if you will hear it.'

'Tell it, dear.'

'I was asking him how it was that he was able to carry us out of ourselves while

he told us those things which we both remember, Cicely. He said that we were not carried out of ourselves at all: it was the elevation of the soul caused by the contemplation of things spiritual and divine. Upon this elevation of soul wicked men work and deceive people, so that the noblest and best part of us is wickedly converted into a channel for carrying out their base frauds and cheats. It is only since the events of the last week or two that he has been able to understand the unutterable baseness of the whole pretence of Spiritualism. Oh! Cicely, you do well to pity him, and to forgive him. If only I can hope to succeed in making him forgive himself!’

‘You will never cease to try, dear’—Cicely held out her hands. ‘Oh! the better nature will subdue the baser. You will be happy, Hetty. Let him never for a moment regret the vanished Past. Take him where no one knows what he has been. You will be happy, dear.’

‘I escape, Cicely,’ said Hetty. ‘That

ought to be enough for me. And I escape with the man I love. That is more than enough for me.'

'Sibyl, dear,' said Cicely, 'when you go to your new home with Tom, take me with you. Promise, Sibyl. I will give you very little trouble. I will sit in my own room. But I could not stay in this house when you are gone—and Hetty gone. It is a haunted house. I hear all day long the voice of Paul—who speaks of Death and of the Soul and of the Other World. Promise, Sibyl; let me go before that voice becomes the voice of a mocking and a lying Spirit.'

CHAPTER XIV.

A WEDDING DAY.

THERE are weddings which must be festive occasions. They are those where the course of true love has run quite smoothly past level lawns where the lads and lasses play lawn tennis between trim hedges, past flowering banks, past lovely town gardens and stately houses. They are those in which the parents on both sides are convinced that the young people were made for each other. They are also those in which the marriage settlements are everything that can be desired. Other weddings there are in which the bride and bridegroom are married under some kind of cloud. There are many and varying clouds which darken poor Humanity: the cloud

penitential : the cloud pecuniary : the cloud of disobedience : or the cloud of elopement. When a couple marry under the shadow of such a cloud, their union must be strictly private.

Paul walked alone to the church on his wedding day. He had no friends : no young man in the whole world was more friendless ; the Medium, to begin with, is always a solitary being ; he who has resigned that profession is more solitary still, because he has lost such companions as he had among the scanty and jealous members of this calling. But he had recovered something of his gallant bearing, and walked with head erect as a bridegroom should. He was now at peace with all the world, because he was no longer going to prey upon them ; more than that, he was at peace with himself ; at five-and-twenty the temperament is elastic and sanguine. And he was going to be married—and he was going away—and he was going to be advised and directed for the rest of his life by his wife—a prospect which filled this

remarkable young man with infinite satisfaction.

In Harley Street—he was making his way to Marylebone church—he was stopped by none other than Mr. Emanuel Chick.

‘I beg your pardon, Mr. Paulus,’ said the General Practitioner of Spiritualism. ‘I beg your pardon, sir. I was in the Hall the other day and I had the pleasure of hearing your remarks.’

‘Oh! Then I hope you were edified, Mr. Chick.’

‘I was. I was both edified and pleased. What Lady Augusta said afterwards—but you didn’t hear that—was all bally rot. *We* know—Herr Paulus—*we* know,’ he chuckled and rubbed his hands. ‘Now, I ask you, sir—that night when you first sprung it on ’em, didn’t I say that it was nothing but mesmerism?’

‘You did, Chick, you certainly did.’

‘Well, you were down upon me after that, and you’ve been down upon me ever since. No more séances for Emanuel Chick. Oh,

no ! He's played out, he is. Dawg bite dawg ! That's always the way with Spiritualists. Spoil the trade, they do, instead of stickin' together.'

'Well, Mr. Chick?'

'Yes; and now you hold your head up high just as if you hadn't gone and told everybody openly that you've been a humbug all along.'

'That is so, Chick. You can't hold your head high, you see, because you haven't told anybody.'

'I always thought it was your doing—Mr. Brudenel writing that letter when he told me to buy shares in his Company.'

'No, I knew nothing about that letter. There you wrong me, Chick.'

'I don't half believe you,' said the man, with a cunning look. 'Well, whether you did or whether you didn't, p'raps you'll be sorry to hear that Mr. Brudenel has behaved like a gentleman.'

'Not at all sorry. I always thought he was a gentleman.'

‘And he’s repaid the ’ole of that money, the ’ole of it, sir, in water shares—two thousand pounds’ worth; because it was his fault that I took the money. Two thousand pounds’ worth. I thought you’d like to know, that’s all.’

‘Thank you, Chick, thank you. I’m very glad to know it.’

‘We shan’t see you much more over there, I take it?’ he jerked his thumb in the direction of St. John’s Wood.

‘No, Chick, no,’ he replied cheerfully. ‘Good day to you—good day.’

Chick looked after him as he walked away.

‘He’s got what I never had,’ he murmured. ‘And he looks a swell. It’s written in his face and it’s spoken by his eyes. He is a swell, and he’ll always be a swell. Wonder what he did it for. Wonder why he got up on the platform and told ’em. Wonder what his game is. You can’t make much by being a converted Medium—or I’d try it. I wonder now, what he did it for.’

Every professional Medium in the world, when the story of this Great Renunciation reached his ears, wondered why Paul did it. Virtue, in cases where there is no reward visibly sticking out of a handbag, is difficult of comprehension by the professional Medium.

Hetty's Wedding was, therefore, private and quiet, as was suitable to the occasion. Mr. Medlock refused to give away his daughter, but was observed at the doors of the church looking on with a gloomy brow at the flight of all his hopes. When the service was concluded he walked away in the direction of Beaumont Street, doubtless to condole with the other victim of Paul's contumacy and Hetty's disobedience.

Lavinia was present in her customary dress of black stuff, looking like a pew-opener. She wept copiously during the service. Did she weep because her daughter was going away from the house of tricks and shams? Or did she weep at the failure of her husband's scheme? Or did she weep

because she herself was left behind to carry on the old, the stale old game? Contrary to reasonable expectation, no rappings attested the satisfaction, or the contrary, felt by the spirits at the auspicious event. And they might have made the occasion so important in the annals of spiritualism. This is how the best opportunities get fooled away. Not a single rap, not a note or a bar of celestial music, not the quiver of a single concertina. Nor, again, did the Sage of Abyssinia make a sign of friendship towards his old pupil and messenger. Think of the splendid effect of a letter straight from Izák the Falasha fluttering down from the roof of Marylebone Church upon the head of the bridegroom! Think of the splendid effect which might have been produced by the Philosopher's Apparition! Sibyl and Bethiah were the only other witnesses of the marriage and the bride was given away by the vergers.

It was a gloomy ceremony. The only actor in it who was perfectly happy was the bride. Hetty was going 'out of it' at last.

Farewell for ever to manifestations, séances, rappings, messages, and the music of heaven! No more guilty consciousness of tricks which she could not reveal because the performer was her own mother ; no more inquiry of any oracle—all that was done with. Paul was coming with her ‘out of it’ too. How could she disguise her happiness and her joy?

When the service was over and the book signed and witnessed, the bride and bridegroom took leave of their friends in the vestry.

‘My daughter,’ said Lavinia, ‘when shall I ever see you again? Oh! Hetty, Hetty!’

‘I will write to you, mother,’ said Hetty. ‘I will write through Sibyl. You are not to know, on account of father, where we are living. I do not wish to see him again, ever, I think. But you I shall see again when—you know—I told you last night, mother.’

‘I can’t; it’s no use; Haynes won’t hear of it. I can’t give it up. How are we to live? Your father won’t hear of it. We are going to America on a tour. It’s my liveli-

hood, child ; and now he's going to live on it as well.'

'Good-bye, mother. When you are tired of it send me word, through Sibyl. Good-bye. Oh, mother!' she whispered once more, 'give it up!'

They drove away to Victoria Station in a four-wheeled cab which had their luggage on the top, and the rest of the forlorn bridal party remained standing outside the church, under the great porch. Lavinia was weeping still. A very quiet wedding, without a single wedding present, except certain 'things' which Hetty had on—Bethiah gave her those. She would take nothing from anyone in the house where Paul had played his adventurous game. Not a single present, even from Cicely, who loved her ; or from Lady Augusta, who was grateful for her services ; or from Sibyl. Her husband must not profit by so much as a single pair of gloves from that house.

'It isn't for the marriage that I am crying, Miss Brudenel,' said Lavinia ; ' Paul will make her a good husband, I'm sure. The

like of him—clever and soft and easy led—mostly make good husbands when they don't take to drink. But it's the awful throwing away of the most splendid chances that were ever offered to any young couple. That's what I feel. He was offered only yesterday—for a last chance—a half partnership, and to take the money himself, and two thousand pounds down, and he threw it up. And why? All for a silly scruple. All because he would have to work by his cleverness and not by the Spirits at all. Why, I knew from the beginning that he couldn't be a Medium. You can tell a Medium at first sight. There's a look in a Medium's eyes, even in such a Medium as Emanuel Chick, though he does make the whole room smell of rum; Paul's eyes never had that look.'

'Oh! but Mrs. Medlock, Paul and Hetty felt that it would not be honest,' said Sibyl.

'It's as honest a trade as any. There's pretence everywhere. And isn't it throwing in her own mother's teeth a reflection on her own mother—that she won't let him carry on

that trade? How are they to live, I should like to know? And they are going away, and I shall lose my daughter; because she says that she will never, never, never let that good old gentleman who offered Paul the partnership know where her husband is living. I've lost my girl. She wasn't altogether what she might have been; she would never help her mother in the way of her profession. And she has thrown away the most beautiful and heavenly gifts of clairvoyance. Oh! what a sin and a shame it is!

Then the two girls left her, and walked slowly away.

'It is all over now,' said Bethiah. 'There is nothing left to do but to take him back to America. Sibyl, don't publish any story about him.'

'My dear, I never intended to.'

'Don't let Lady Augusta publish anything. She said she was going to—you know—at the hall the other day. It might follow Paul and find him out and make him unhappy. His only chance is to forget everything.'

‘Can he ever forget?’

‘You don’t know my boy,’ said Bethiah. ‘If he wants to forget it he will put it behind him and forget it in a week. He forgot to write to me, or to his parents, for some years. Why? Because of the incongruity between the bare, ugly truth, and his pretensions. I suppose it would have made him uncomfortable. So while he was in New York he was the Signor Paolo—he learned the language of a wandering Italian—the native village and the general store—the village shop—were forgotten—and so were his father and his mother, and all his old friends. They had to be forgotten. Else he would have felt uncomfortable.’

‘He could make believe, in fact.’

‘Oh! yes. Nobody in the world could make believe better. I am quite sure that he felt himself an Italian when he was Signor Paolo, and he felt himself a Teacher of the Ancient Philosophy, and believed, in a kind of a way, in his Abyssinian Sage. Why, you heard what Lady Augusta said of him. If he

had not believed himself in what he was teaching them, how could he have impressed her so profoundly ?'

'Where did he get his wisdom from ?'

'Well, Sibyl, I come of a Puritan stock, and so I think he got it out of a certain Book in which he used to read a great deal when he was a boy. I have seen him in our old garden declaiming aloud the splendid passages of Isaiah, Ezekiel, and Amos. He drew upon his memory. I am sure of it, because Cicely once tried to reproduce some of his discourse, and I remembered the ideas and the language.'

'Has he communicated with his mother ?'

'Yes, I made him write. He expressed his penitence for his long silence, and said that if he had been doing any good for himself he should have written before ; but that he was ashamed to tell the story of ill-spent Time. I have dissuaded him from telling all the story, or any of it. His mother would be too truly horrified if she knew it. He told her, however, that he was bringing a wife home with him.'

‘But,’ said Sibyl, ‘how will Hetty like living with the old people?’

‘She will not live with them. Paul can never go back to live in the little town. I think he must live in the country, but near a great town—perhaps near Boston. It is not likely that people will remember Signor Paolo, even in New York, and in Boston they have probably never even heard of him. It was only among Spiritualists that he was known.’

‘Do you think that Paul will ever be able to do the rough work of a journalist? Have they not to attend meetings and be up all night and run about perpetually?’

‘I do not expect that he will do that. But our journals want all kinds of work: they are the literature of the people: they present reading of every kind. Paul will quickly learn to provide the kind of thing which will take and sell. He is quick to see, and I know that he can write.’

‘Poor Paul! Poor Hetty!’

‘She is not to be pitied at all. She loves her husband. That is everything.’

‘Bethiah.’ Sibyl touched her hand—it is a woman’s sign of affection and consideration. ‘Why is it—why did not Paul fall in love with you?’

‘Well, Sibyl, I don’t quite know. It is just as well as it is. For my part I have always loved the boy—and if he had reminded me that he was not, after all, my brother, I might—but that is rubbish. I am his sister and I love him just as much as ever. And so, you see, Sibyl, as I am his sister, I can never let him want, can I?’

A week later Tom and Sibyl stood upon the platform at St. Pancras. They were come to say good-bye to the man who had saved their fortunes and persuaded a consent to their marriage out of Mr. Brudenel.

‘For such services,’ said Tom, ‘I would even shake hands with a dynamitard.’

It was not an ordinary leave-taking. They could not say ‘Come again soon,’ or ‘We expect you over again next year,’ or ‘We shall not be happy till you repeat your visit.’

Nothing of that sort could even be hinted at, because Paul must never return to England ; not until every one of the multitude who filled that hall and heard that confession had passed away.

‘ You will write, Hetty,’ said Sibyl. ‘ Write to Cicely first, and to me sometimes. Tell me what you are doing and how you are getting on. My poor Hetty !’

‘ I am very happy. I am going to be as happy as the day is long,’ she said, bravely, taking her husband’s hand.

‘ Now,’ said Bethiah, ‘ the guard is looking at the tickets. Good-bye, Sibyl. I will write to you as well, if you will let me. Here is a little present for you. Lay it at the bottom of your desk, and look at it now and then. Good-bye.’

‘ Paul,’ said Tom, holding his hand with the firm grasp of friendship, ‘ we are your debtors. We can never pay that debt. Some day, perhaps, you will remember that fact. Promise me, that if occasion arises, you will remember it.’

Paul shook his head.

‘It is good of you both,’ he said, ‘to see us off. I shall not readily forget that, anyhow.’

Then the train rolled away and they were gone.

Sibyl opened the parting present when she reached home.

It was a pencil sketch of Paul’s face drawn by Bethiah. The face was idealised. It was Paul as he might be. Paul filled with noble thoughts. Paul purified. Every face may be thus idealised and purified. My dear young lady, you think yourself beautiful as things are. You would be astonished at your own beauty could you see your face when it has passed through this process.

‘Yes,’ said Sibyl, ‘I shall look at it sometimes. It is with this expression on his face that I shall remember Paul.’

EPILOGUE.

SIX weeks after their wedding Tom and Sibyl came home again. The period of profound meditation and philosophic calm which we call the honeymoon had not saddened them, or made them discontented with their lot, or diminished their hopefulness for the future. Quite the contrary. They were profoundly satisfied with themselves and with their lot and with the world in general. As for Paul and the late events, which we have rescued from oblivion, they had nearly forgotten them. Paul was only one more of the many impostors and pretenders who had fastened for a space upon Sibyl's father, different from the rest in the fact that, oddly enough, he had not endeavoured to get any

money for himself, and that he was a comely and well-mannered youth, and that he had repented in sackcloth and covered his head with ashes and rent his garments and wailed aloud and done penance and confessed his sins before the assembled multitude. These incidents in his career would naturally keep his memory green for a space. But he was passing out of Sibyl's mind in her new wedded life, and his portrait lies at the bottom of a drawer full of letters, and she never takes it out to look at it. Tom is enough, you see, to fill all her thoughts.

As for Paul's teaching—that wonderful philosophy which so moved the heart of Lady Augusta—nothing of it has yet been written down, and now I do not think any will be written down. Nobody talks about it, and the promised present of the Book of Wisdom, written by King Solomon and taken to Abyssinia by Prince Menelek, has not yet arrived.

‘I do hope, Tom,’ said Sibyl—it was before her marriage—‘that the house is now going to be kept clear of the old spirit business.

If Paul did nothing else, he cleared the house of all that rubbish. My father ceased for a while, at least, to believe in his old Mediums. I do hope that the effect will be lasting. But I fear, Tom, I fear. They have both been engaged too long in their Research to abandon it altogether even after such a blow as this.'

'But they will not acknowledge it to be a blow,' said Tom.

'No.' Sibyl sighed. 'They never will acknowledge any blow, however hard, though they feel it all the time. One Medium after another arrives and shows off his little tricks, and gets applause and money. Then he is discredited. It is set down to the mocking spirit and the lying spirit. But he is discredited all the same, and has to go away. As for Paul, you heard what Lady Augusta said at the conference about his wonderful and apostolical teaching. Well, it is already nearly forgotten. He is discredited, and he is gone. He will soon be remembered only as one among many, though he was the brightest

and the cleverest of them all. But the Cause is never abandoned—never even considered in any danger. Why, Tom, though I hate the whole thing, I find myself actually believing it sometimes, just because, I suppose, I have been in the habit of hearing it always spoken of as a true thing of which there can be no doubt.'

'You can make people believe anything,' said Tom, 'if you keep speaking of it as if it were established beyond any doubt.'

Naturally, on their return home, Lady Augusta gave a dinner party.

Sibyl saw, without astonishment, yet with sorrow, that there had been already a return to the gods of the old school—the pre-Pauline period, so to speak. The Rev. Benjamin Rudge was a guest; Mr. Emanuel Chick was present; Mr. Amelius Horton, Mr. Athelstan Kilburn, Mrs. Tracy Hanley and her husband, with others of the Persuasion. It was a large dinner party, and during the period of waiting, Sibyl became aware that there was another guest of honour beside herself.

‘We are to have another intellectual feast this evening,’ she heard the Rev. Benjamin Rudge’s loud voice proclaim. ‘So much is certain. It is a lady—they say from Russia—but we have not heard her name. She has arrived, and is in the house already.’ That well-known and uncomfortable sensation of having seen the thing already, crept over Sibyl, and her heart sank because she found that this dinner was to be followed by another manifestation of peculiar interest.

‘Yes, my dear,’ said her father, tapping his knuckles with his glasses, and speaking with the fidgety nervousness which she knew so well. ‘We have a visitor whose social position alone guarantees her good faith. She is not by any means an unknown adventuress, such as we have sometimes entertained. She is a Russian Princess of the highest family—even connected with the Imperial House. Her manifestations prove a very advanced stage of Spiritualistic effect. But you shall see, my child, and judge for yourself. We

always prefer to be judged by those who are hostile to us. Tom shall himself pronounce an opinion.'

'It is not,' Emanuel Chick was saying; 'it is not by making experiments and showing off fireworks in magnetism that we can accomplish results. We have got to feel our way, step by step—little by little. We have got to encounter lying spirits and mocking spirits. But think of the results we have already achieved. It is a science, sir, and it must be conducted on scientific methods. The Medium must feel his way. He ought to be endowed by the State, and the results ought to be published in full so as to remain on record.'

Here the Russian phenomenon—the Princess Olga Alexandrovna—appeared at the door.

She was young and remarkable in appearance, if not beautiful. She was dressed in black velvet and lace, very rich, simple, and striking. She stood for a moment in the doorway, where the light fell full upon her,

just as an actress when she appears upon the stage stands for a moment in order to let the audience take in the beauty of her face, her figure, and her raiment. This young lady's features were regular; her features were sharp—her friends said they were of extreme delicacy; her voice was sharp and rather rasping; her hair was dark, nearly black; and her eyes matched her hair. In other circles and in former times they would have been called 'bold.' Her mouth was firm—even hard; her smile was ready—her friends called it winning; those who did not like her so much said that it was hard and void of merriment. Her name was Olga Alexandrovna, and she was a native of St. Petersburg, but she had the look of the Tartar. She said sharp things, sometimes very rude things, but her friends said they were epigrams, and she had written a book—it was in French, but had been translated into English, which old-fashioned people would not suffer to enter their houses, or to be upon their tables. Her friends said it was a book

in which for the first time a woman had dared to speak the truth.

The dinner was like one of the old Functions which Sibyl remembered so well, and those which the natural liveliness of Paul had banished. It was as dull, as stupid, and as solemn. A whole Bench of Beadles could not have dined together more solemnly; the whole body of Cathedral Vergers could not have been more solemn. Everybody wanted to hear what the new Prophetess would say; and her remarks were sometimes inaudible.

Sibyl thought of the first evening when Herr Paulus came; and how the people craned their necks and strained their ears to catch his words. But Herr Paulus, Sibyl thought, being a woman, and therefore perhaps prejudiced, was a great deal more interesting than Princess Olga Alexandrovna, and much better looking.

The Princess, it presently appeared, belonged not to Paul's School of the Ancient Way—which was peculiar to himself—but to

that of the modern Occult Philosophy, whose prophet is — or was — none other than Madame Blavatzky. A good many people know by this time the language of the school, which has followers and puts forward pretensions. The Princess talked glibly of Thibet, Mahatmas, Astral Bodies, Karma, Yogees, and the Esoteric Buddhism.

The guests, especially Lady Augusta, listened and fancied that knowledge of the most valuable kind was being imbibed at every pore. But Mr. Emanuel Chick paid no attention to the beautiful talk, making the best of his time over the truly excellent dinner and the wine, which he could not get anywhere else. It is the unhappy lot of Mediums to acquire a taste for good old port and fine claret, which cannot be gratified except on those rare occasions when they are invited to such a hospitable board as Lady Augusta's. Mr. Chick was now quite happy, and did not care twopence what the Russian Medium was saying. His enemy, Paul, was gone, after such a disgrace as would have

snuffed out any Medium—even himself—for ever. Mr. Brudenel had given him back the money that he had lost. He had also called him in just as before, to carry on Research on the old lines. Raps were again heard in the study when Emanuel Chick was present, and messages of a most interesting character were once more received and communicated.

Princess Olga Alexandrovna, therefore, talked after her kind, and the company listened. Just now there is a good deal of talk after her kind; one hears—but perhaps even as I write the thing is going out of fashion—of strictly private and select circles where the disciples gather together and whisper about coming marvels and great achievements, and the great and wonderful disclosures which are to be made the day after to-morrow. They have not seen these achievements, but they have been heard of. The coming marvels are on their way, but they have not arrived. The day after to-morrow is the only day which never comes. To-morrow is certain. Not the day after to-morrow, which never arrives.

No doubt the wheels of the chariots which bear the new Prophets can even now be heard, by those who have ears, rumbling across the world from far off Lassa. But up to the present moment Madame Blavatzky stands alone and is as yet unsurpassed. Fortunately for the sacred Cause of Occult Philosophy, she is her own Prophet and does not use any of her bushels for the hiding of her light. She has also retained the services of another and more accomplished Prophet, who is always proclaiming the Truth divine. Between the two that Truth is certain to prevail.

The manifestations were over.

‘Lady Augusta,’ said the Rev. Benjamin Rudge, with note-book in hand, ‘we have had a glorious—a glorious evening. Never before, in man’s memory, has there been such a generous, such a noble outpouring of spirit influence upon any circle. It must be recorded in public, and that without delay. And, oh! Lady Augusta, when we get our College at last, what an opportunity, *what*

a chance for the honour of the country if we could secure Princess Olga Alexandrovna for one of our Professors! That College! How gladly would I act as its secretary, Lady Augusta! What zeal, what energy, would I throw into the cause!’

‘We shall see, Mr. Rudge,’ said Lady Augusta. ‘The evening has been a remarkable one, indeed.’

‘What do you say, Chick?’ asked Tom, *sotto voce*.

‘Fireworksh, Mr. Langston, fireworksh.’ His voice was just a little thick. The soundest port will produce this effect upon some constitutions. ‘Shame as Herr Paulus. Fireworksh and mesmerism and conjuring. Just the shame. Give ’em rope for a bit, and then they will all come back to me and the old methods. Shame as they did with him. Nothing like science, Mr. Langston, after all. Why, I could give you resultsh——’

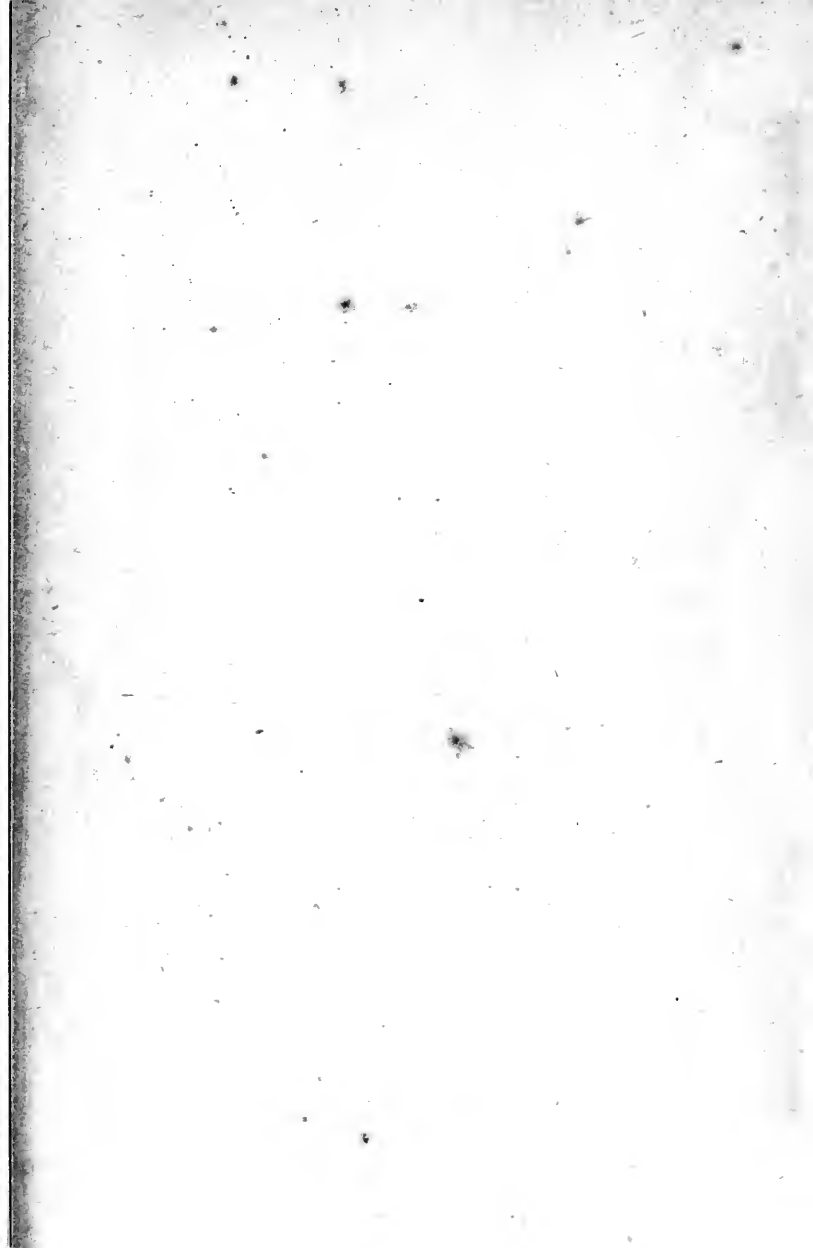
‘Princess—oh! Princess Olga Alexandrovna,’ murmured Mrs. Tracy Hanley. ‘I must, I feel I must, implore you to come to my

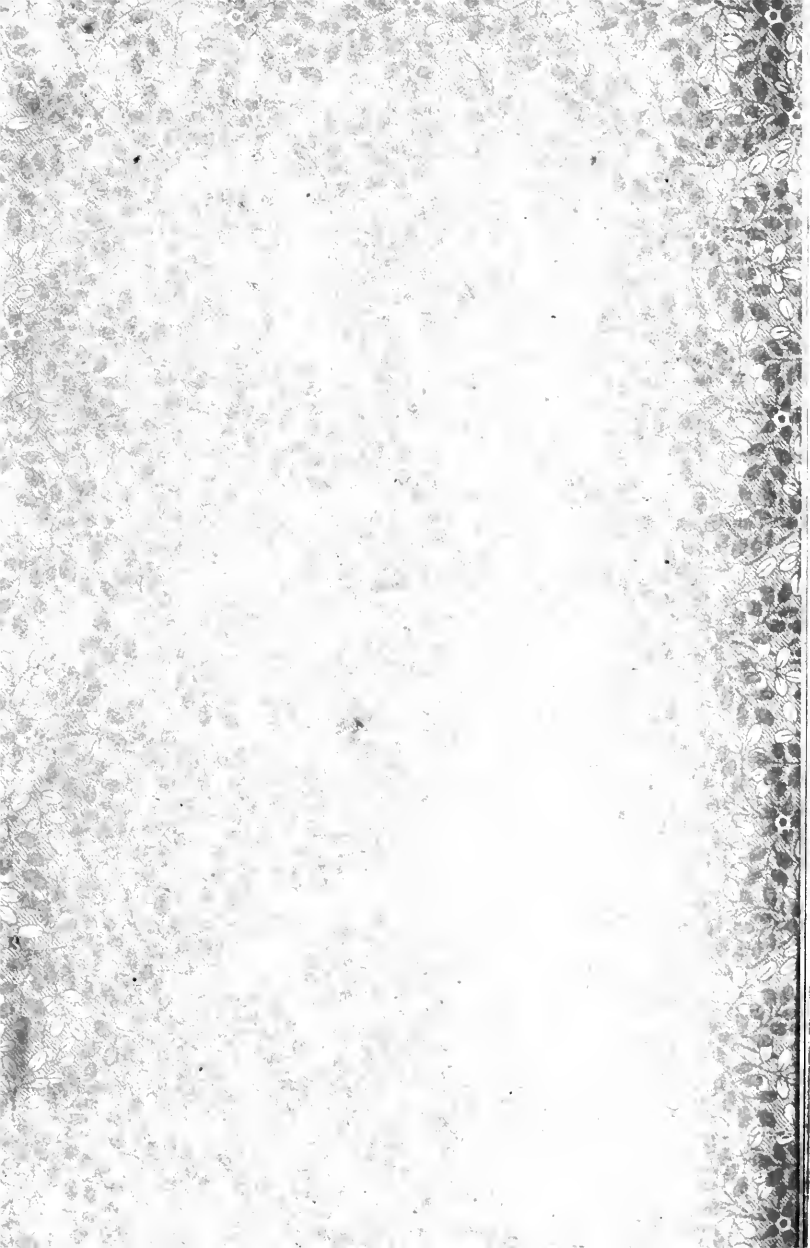
Sunday evenings. Not to do anything, unless you like ; not to teach us, but to rest—to rest—among friends. We are all friends at my Sunday evenings. May I have your promise to come? You are so great and so highly gifted that you will have many invitations from those who would merely like to show a Russian Princess in their rooms, and get you to exhibit your wonderful powers for the admiration and envy of their friends. But with us you will have repose and the quiet talk which refreshes the soul. You will come—only say that you will come. Oh, Princess, there has never been such an evening.’

‘My Friends!’ It was the voice of Mr. Cyrus Brudenel. He had now assumed his pince-nez, and his face was radiant and his voice triumphant. ‘My dear friends, we have never been associated at an evening marked throughout by such splendid manifestation of power. This night will ever be remembered as one of distinct advance—we are indeed nearer to the spirits. We have taken a step

within the unknown land, and had such a glimpse as has never been vouchsafed before. Princess Olga Alexandrovna, I do not say that we thank you. Such a word is too feeble to express the joy of our hearts. We congratulate ourselves upon your arrival. We feel too deeply for expression the help that you will give us—the English seekers in Spiritualism.’ Sibyl again experienced that uncomfortable sensation of having seen the thing before, perhaps because she recognised a certain look in her father’s eyes, which told her what was coming. ‘My Friends,’ he said, with firm voice and becoming gesture of hand and foot, ‘we stand—we stand at last, I say—upon the SOLID ROCK!’

THE END.





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Besant, (Sir) Walter
Herr Paulus, his rise,
his greatness, and his fall

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